THE DOCTRINES OF ANNIHILATION AND UNIVERSALISM.

REV. T. WOOD.

£4

United College, Bradford.

Room G Case XII. Shelf 1.

The Library
INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN
GRADUATE UNIVERSITY

on erroneous presuppositions respecting the Hebrew scriptures & the nature of sin. Men cannot be accurately lumped into good & bad. It is a crude idea. The argument is conducted on a narrow plane without reference to the end & purpose of God in creation & the responsibility of God as a cofactor. The statements respecting universalism are quite inadequate & indeed Erroneous.

THE DOCTRINES OF

ANNIHILATION AND UNIVERSALISM

VIEWED IN THE LIGHT OF

REASON, ANALOGY, AND REVELATION.

BY THE

REV. THOMAS WOOD.

BT
930
W66
1877

London:

PUBLISHED FOR THE AUTHOR, AT THE
WESLEYAN CONFERENCE OFFICE,
2, CASTLE-ST., CITY-ROAD;
SOLD AT 66, PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1877.

HAYMAN BROTHERS AND LILLY,
PRINTERS,
HATTON HOUSE, FARRINGDON ROAD
LONDON, E.C.

The Library
INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN
GRADUATE UNIVERSITY

PREFACE.

THE subjects treated of in this small volume are not very popular in the estimation of the general public. Nevertheless, they demand the thoughtful attention of all Christian men. The author will not waste the time of the reader in apologies for having sent this production into the world. 'An amiable weakness' often leads wise and good men into this error. Society in some localities is being almost inundated with books and pamphlets in favour of the theories of Annihilation and Universalism. It was therefore thought that a small volume putting the various points in dispute in a succinct and elementary form might be of some service, especially to the uninitiated, leaving the subtleties of this controversy in other and abler hands.

In venturing to contribute a few pages to the general current of thought, the cost has been counted of daring to speak plainly in direct opposition to men who are held in high personal regard; and it is hoped that no canon of literary civility has been violated in

33220

so doing. The sincerity of many of those who have entered the arena of theological conflict in opposition to the orthodox views is unquestioned. The chapter and verse in quoting Scripture have not always been given, as the passages are patent to the mind of the general reader. Nor have the names of all the authors been stated from whose pages are taken the extracts in favour of Annihilation and Universalism. It was thought preferable to discuss their sentiments without the appearance of undue personality. They are quoted, however, with scrupulous accuracy.

The ground of *absolute* certainty is not claimed for the orthodox views, but the *highest probability*.

The writer cannot speak too highly of Mr. Randles' Essay *For Ever*. To its pages he has been deeply indebted. It is *the Work* in this controversy on the orthodox side, and that in it the whole subject is exhaustively treated in all its bearings. Some of the arguments from Mr. Geden's able lecture on *The Doctrine of a Future Life* are equally powerful in support of the immortality of the soul, and have thus been used.

Thanks are here accorded to the author of *Ecce Deus* for his generous permission to use

the outline of the argument on eternal punishment. A few pithy sentences, duly acknowledged, have been taken from the writings of Dr. Thomas, editor of *The Homilist*, a man who has done more for the *intellectual* regeneration of the pulpit, not only of this country, but of Christendom, than any other man of modern times. May his years still be many. Mr. Chapman's essay has been of much service (though the sentiments have been manipulated and transposed) in the opening chapter.

Mr. Baxter's little volume has been very helpful, and also the anonymous tract to which reference is made. May the Good Spirit bless all the *Truth* this book contains.

STRATTON, CIRENCESTER,
March, 1877.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

https://archive.org/details/bwb_C0-CDH-516

CONTENTS.

PAGE.

CHAPTER I.

Conflict of Opinions 1

CHAPTER II.

A Popular Fallacy 14

CHAPTER III.

The Foundation Fact 18

CHAPTER IV.

Responsibility the Basis of Judgment . . . 29

CHAPTER V.

Eternity of the Judgment 36

CHAPTER VI.

What saith the Scripture? 46

CHAPTER VII.

False Assumptions Respecting the Judgment . . 57

CHAPTER VIII.

Judgment as it Affects the Character of God . 66

CHAPTER IX.

The Doctrine of Annihilation 76

CHAPTER X.

The Doctrine of Universalism 93

CHAPTER XI.

Miscellaneous Objections 107

CHAPTER XII.

Concluding Remarks 115

THE DOCTRINES OF

ANNIHILATION AND UNIVERSALISM.

CHAPTER I.

CONFLICT OF OPINIONS.

Opinions differ in almost every department of human thought and activity. Perhaps there is not a single subject of study on which men have not spoken in terms somewhat at variance. The sublime and sacred mysteries of divine revelation afford no exception to this rule. Men are fiercely disputing respecting the interpretation to be put on some of the vital portions of Divine Truth. This state of things we are disposed to attribute, in some cases to mental deficiency, in others to a lack of moral insight, and in not a few cases to moral deformity. But out of all this diversity of opinion good will be sure to come.* Opinions first clash, then minds grapple, and

* See an *Essay on Conflict of Opinions*, by Rev. C. Chapman, M.A., published 1864, to which we are deeply indebted in this chapter.

the result is truth standing forth in a purer light. Without this conflict many a thoughtful man would be left to the miserable fate of floundering about in the sea of everlasting doubt.

As long as we are finite in our capacities, and truth is infinite in its relations, diversity of opinion may be expected. We are *men*, not *gods*. Limitation is the regulative and controlling law of our being. Finiteness is our necessary inheritance, and fallibility is not our accident, but an essential quality of our nature. Imperfection as to extent and accuracy of knowledge is the legitimate and unavoidable consequence of our restricted powers.

There will then inevitably arise difficulty and deficiency in becoming possessed of positive knowledge, and equal difficulty and failure in separating at all times what is false and what is true. No man can drink from a brook without taking in with the pure water particles of sand or multitudes of invisible animalculæ. And there are few minds, however careful they may be, but that, in going to the pure fountain of sacred truth receive and transfuse into their intellectual and moral life fragments of error and distortions of truth. How often is this the case in the most sincere attempts to understand and

expound the doctrines of Scripture! But we should ever feel that we tread on a sure and eternal rock when we accept divine revelation as *true;* upon this point there should not be the slightest doubt or difficulty. It is in the interpretation put upon that revelation only that opinions should clash; and it would be a grief to every sincere Christian if this development of the reflective faculty should lead men to become sceptical respecting the foundation of the truth itself. It is possible to think, without doubting the great and well attested facts of revelation; facts which have been accepted by the vast mass of Christian men on evidence as broad and well proven as can ever be submitted to the human mind. And yet we are bound to acknowledge that conclusions once carefully formed respecting the particulars arising out of those facts are sometimes modified by the reception of increased light and a more accurate induction of particulars. Diversity of opinion, then, is natural and unavoidable respecting the interpretation of God's Word, and it may be further remarked, that a conflict of opinions is equally to be expected. There is certainly a liberty granted to every man to form his own opinions,—he being responsible to the great Arbiter for the conclusions at which he

arrives, as well as for the manner, careless or conscientious, by which he arrives at them. No one should strive to rob man of this liberty. It is his everlasting inheritance, his inalienable privilege in all rightly constituted communities. An expression of opinion is intimately allied to an effort to spread that opinion. The diffusion of knowledge, the quickening of the public intellect, the advancement of human happiness, and the realization of man's highest destiny,—all are dependent on efforts to make known what we think, what truth, or supposed truth, we have to communicate. No man should be made to suffer for the expression of his deepest convictions.

We should be a feeble race, mentally and morally, if we were to care nothing about maintaining what we deem to be right and true. There is dignity and grandeur in the firm resolve of men to think, speak, and act according to their convictions.

Carlyle's admiration of the Puritans, in this respect, is well founded; alas for the day when Christian men deem it a small matter what they believe in morals and religion! Conflict is the sign of vigour and life. 'Woe unto the Church when honest thought and honest speech are repressed. When intellect

is stagnant, its putrid effluvium may corrupt the heart's holiest feelings.

'Let us treat the honest thinker with Christian manliness, though he may shock some old prejudice; the very convulsion may ventilate our being with the pure air of Heaven.'*

Much of the controversy of the present day has originated in consequence of men failing to discriminate between the nature of their assertions and the kind of acceptance their assertions can properly claim. There is a wide difference between axioms and suppositions, first principles and derived conclusions, matters of fact and matters of belief.

An axiom, or a first principle, is something that cannot possibly be called in question. But a matter of belief is dependent for its truth on the weight of probable evidence. The reasons in the two cases ought to be different in tone. Indifference to these points has led to bitterness, intolerance, and persecution.

One of the most painful things to a well cultivated mind is to witness the arrogance and self-sufficiency with which some individuals virtually assert their own infallibility, and therefore fail to do the honour to their fellow-creatures which they desire for themselves.

* Dr. Parker.

Nor is this course of conduct confined to any one party in these religious controversies. Dogmatism and tyranny are the legitimate offspring of this anti-religious *spirit.* There has also been much conflict occasioned by the parties referred to not being careful in defining accurately their peculiar views.

There is a considerable difference between describing and defining a thing; hence these controversies have sometimes diverged into mere quibbles. And it is not too much to ask of this 'new school' of theologians to state the points to be discussed in clear and carefully expressed propositions.

Among other things contributing to this conflict of opinion is the imperfect knowledge of many who enter the arena of strife. Ignorance is necessarily an occasion of the conflict of opinion on one side at least. But very much disputation might be avoided if men would only remember that the opinions they advance as new have often been advanced before, that the light for which they ask was shining long before they were born, that the supposed lustre gathered around some portion of divine revelation was not the native brightness of truth but merely the product of a lively imagination. One form in which this ignorance shows itself consists in the sup-

position that what is accepted and *old* is therefore necessarily inadequate and probably false, while what is not generally accepted and *new* is for that reason most likely to be true. This state of mind has generated an antagonistic spirit, which begins its destructive work in the region of truth by doubting the value of all opinions entertained by the ancients, and proposes to enrich the Church by supplying a system of doctrines specially created for an advanced state of religious life. One cannot but pity the self-importance and vanity which set at nought the toils of long centuries. We ask in vain for evidence from God's Word in support of those new truths with which the present generation is said to be blessed. In matters of physical science there is an advance most manifest; but in morals, in spiritual truth, in the facts and doctrines of the Christian religion, what do we know more than was known by the writers of the New Testament? Vain assertion will not do. We want to know precisely what wonders are now revealed that had before been unknown. Modern criticism in many hands is not an organ of knowledge so much as an instrument of destruction; in no case does it add to the amount of spiritual and moral truths in the Church, any more than

the tools of a miner add to the quantity of coal and ore under the earth.

And it may well be questioned whether, amidst the exciting religious controversies of the times, we have amongst us men more powerful in grasp of mind and more disciplined to hard and accurate thought on theological subjects than were the vast army of good and learned men of former days. And yet we are convinced that immense good will accrue to the Church by the fair and frank discussion of those vital subjects touching life and its destinies.

There are evils, doubtless, attending this discussion. We must expect events to be deplored where even the holiest men are contending for what they believe to be the truth. The things which mar the conflict of opinions are probably in the end less than the evil that would ensue were the mind left in a state of doubt and uncertainty.

If each party would but express their views in a courteous and dignified spirit, the dangers of controversy would be reduced to a minimum. The interests of religion are certainly so precious, that it is natural for Christian men to be aroused when they suppose an attack is made on the foundations of their faith. But the strong faith we have in the correctness of

the 'orthodox' interpretation of God's Word will not allow us to be unnecessarily disturbed.

The appearance of uneasiness and fear is the natural result of an unintelligent belief, just as the manifestation of bitterness and bad temper is a consequence of an imperfect possession of the spirit of the Gospel. We must also guard against treating men who differ from us as though they were cunning foes, seeking nothing less than the subversion to human theories the doctrines of the Gospel.

There may be a few men so far gone in theoretic and practical scepticism as not to be ashamed to admit this as the true description of their ultimate aim.

Yet it would be a grievous wrong to place all the movers in recent and pending religious controversies in that category. We must confess, however, that the reading of certain pamphlets and other contributions to Biblical criticism has only tended to establish our faith, by showing us the inadequacy of these productions to solve the difficulties in question more satisfactorily than heretofore. Nevertheless, both Christian charity and practical sagacity require that the writers should be treated as men seeking Truth, although in

paths where she cannot be found. They must not be driven to desperation by the use of hard words without argument. If the cause of the 'orthodox' is in the right, as we most sincerely and firmly believe, then a vindication of that cause by fair argument is possible.

Many a man in the wrong may be convinced and won over by a frank and courteous discussion, who otherwise would probably go farther in the path of error because he felt himself to be slighted and abused, not answered. It is the duty of all to pour the oil of kindness and charity into the wheels of controversy; but never let any claimant of rationality and friend of advancement attempt to stop the progress of intelligent and upright discussion. Energy of mind will be sure to produce among men this friction, the result of which will be positive advantages to all parties.

By discussion, the intellect is sharpened. The action of mind on mind gives acuteness and stimulus. The free and open discussion of opinions induces reflection, and leads men to express themselves with more caution and less dogmatism.

In almost every department of knowledge or practice we are liable to go astray, unless kept in check by opposing or contrary forces.

All experience shows that conflict gradually elucidates truth and eliminates error. 'Man, if left to himself, would cover truth with his rubbish; conflict clears much of that rubbish away. Truth is destined to prevail; and prevail it will, but by conflict with error.'

In concluding these remarks, we must not omit all reference to those whose moral deformity is the root of their opposition to the 'orthodox' views of Divine Truth.

The perception of things in their case is very unlike what it would have been had their conscience been right in the sight of God and man, and their dispositions untainted by selfishness or moral vices. In such cases evil tastes have become dominant over reason, and truth in all its aspects is distorted.

Such men will, almost unconsciously, endeavour to bring about an agreement between their habits and propensities and their intellectual operations, which operations are impeded and crippled by the abnormal state of their desires and emotions.

There is a far closer connection between a man's spiritual state and his cognition of certain moral and practical truths than is often supposed.

It may fairly be questioned whether a man

of depraved moral tastes can acquire and use aright the amount of scientific truth, in any department, proportionate to his natural capacities. Bare intellectual operations are injuriously affected by the indirect influence of unhallowed emotions.

But especially is this true when the higher spiritual truths of revelation are under consideration. The unerring Founder of the Christian religion spoke in terms of profound wisdom when He taught that a man's knowing the 'doctrine' to be 'of God' depended very much on his disposition to 'do' the will of his Father in heaven. Men whose moral natures are unregenerate, and consequently opposed to purity of life and the infliction of a just retribution for sin, are, by their moral deformity, rendered incapable of forming a correct judgment respecting these vital questions, and their opinions are consequently imperfect and of little worth.

We have thus indicated the spirit which will guide us in our own contribution to this controversy. However widely sincere Christian men may differ from us in matters of religious belief, we ought to credit them with sincerity. To withhold this, is to violate one of the first principles of religious liberty in matters of conscience.

At the same time, we must not forget that, with the light of revelation shining around, God will hold every man responsible, not for the *sincerity* of his belief, but for the belief itself.

CHAPTER II.

A POPULAR FALLACY.

One of the most pernicious theories of the present day might be put into the following words: 'The sincere and upright of every sect are acceptable to God. Christ will find and recognise His true and faithful servants in connection with every form of religious belief.' The fallacy of these plausible statements will be seen if we contrast them with the language of the apostle: 'But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.'

Our charity respecting the sincerity of religious belief in others must not be stretched beyond the teachings of the New Testament. 'There is a latitudinarianism which denounces all anxiety about holding definite doctrinal verities, and which, while professing great liberality, is often most illiberal. It tells us that doctrinal truth is difficult to find, and

when found is difficult to prove, and when proved, is not so overwhelmingly important as many may seem to regard it; that there is something much more valuable than truth, and that is sincerity,—which, in fact, they think will stand in the stead of truth, when men fail to find it. Sometimes they even recommend that men should make a truce about their doctrinal differences, and say no more concerning them.' Let us beware of this kind of teaching. Can it be immaterial whether we believe the plain doctrines of Scripture, or believe them not?

If we receive them, are we none the better? and if we reject them, are we none the worse?

Is the gospel of truth, which also demands sincerity, to be replaced by a gospel of sincerity which dispenses with truth?

Whatever be true or false, the flaccid, elastic liberalism of which we are now speaking cannot be true. Man is ignorant; and sincerity of itself will never give him light.

Man is powerless, and sincerity of itself will never give him strength. Man is guilty, and sincerity of itself will never secure him pardon. Man is fearful of death, and sincerity of itself will never draw the sting or scatter the gloom which encircles the grave.

In no important department of life is sincerity the substitute for truth. It will not cure us in sickness, however sincere our faith in the wrong medicine; it will not give us wisdom, however sincere our faith in wrong principles of study; it will not give us prosperity, however sincere our faith in ruinous principles of trade; it will not bring us into the right haven, however sincere our faith in the wrong track which our vessel is pursuing. Christ says, 'I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.' 'I came to bear witness of the truth.' 'Ye shall know the truth, and the *truth* shall make you free.' 'Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth.' And Paul himself, who had been sincere as a *Jew*, who had sincerely stood guard over the clothes of Stephen's murderers, who had sincerely haled men and women to prison, and who, when they were put to death, gave his voice against them,—even he, conscious of how little sincerity can do towards a man's salvation without the truth, utters the words just before quoted: 'Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach unto you any other gospel than that we have preached, let him be accursed.' What must have been his conviction of the imperial necessity of truth in order to salvation, who could thus scathe by

anticipation the brow of angels and men who under any pretext should tamper with the gospel of Christ!' * Sincerity without truth is delusive and worthless.

* Dr. Mellor.

CHAPTER III.

THE FOUNDATION FACT.

We are told that at the root of the 'orthodox' view of man's eternal future lies the fact of man's *natural immortality* (we shall have cause, hereafter, to show how misleading and unphilosophical is the phrase *natural immortality*). And this we are told is not taught in the Scriptures. 'We shall pay no homage to the professed sceptic. He is commonly the smallest and most self-sufficient of mankind; and we are as little careful to satisfy his peculiar doubts as we are disposed to recognise his principles or adopt his methods.'* With such a man we have no common ground of argument, and must therefore leave him to flounder in the chaotic darkness which his own scepticism has generated. We also fear that in the case of some Christian men their prejudices in favour of these new theories have become so strong that no amount of evidence

* See Mr. Geden's Lecture, *The Doctrine of a Future Life*, to which we are indebted.

will modify their opinions. Nevertheless, we believe that the doctrine of man's immortality is in harmony with instinct, reason, analogy, and revelation. Is not this the conclusion of thousands of the noblest and most learned men in all ages, after a careful and intelligent study of the Scriptures? Would not any unprejudiced mind comprehend that the passages of Scripture which seem to speak of death as annihilation are to be understood of the complete and final extinction which man then suffers relatively to the present world, that it is their obvious meaning, and that it would be pedantic and sciolism to expound them in any other way? At the beginning of the Scriptures the doctrine of the soul's immortality is clearly indicated. It is implied in the language used by Moses, on the very first page of his history, to describe the original constitution and circumstances of mankind.

'A creature formed in the image and after the likeness of the eternal and invisible God; possessed of a spiritual essence, by its origin and qualities indefinitely lifting him above the rest of the animal creation; holding personal intercourse with the manifested Deity; laid under sacred charge of fidelity to the gift of life that was in him,—a creature so represented is virtually affirmed, as the all-but-

inspired book of Wisdom has it, to have been made for incorruption; and, by the necessity of things, he must himself have been aware that this was his sublime prerogative and destiny. By his very nature he cannot have been ignorant that he belonged to the sphere of the immortal; 'that his closest affinities were with God and spiritual beings; that the everlasting was his province and goal; that, in fact, either on earth or elsewhere, he was heir to an existence coeval with the life of the immortal One, whose child he was.' We think we might argue substantially the same doctrine from the terms in which God communicated with Noah after the deluge touching the matter of guilty homicide. 'Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made He man.' What adequate meaning can these words afford, if they do not involve that same idea of the immaterial and immortal nature of man which we found contained in the language used to describe his original formation and estate? By implication, this divine ordinance of capital punishment for murder was a solemn announcement, first, to the generation which received it, then to all after generations, that the soul of man lives on to an eternal future.

Thus, without pressing dubious passages, the opening pages of the Old Testament are seen to teach the doctrine of immortality, harmonizing with the primeval faiths of our race. And wherever in the earliest stages of the world's history the fundamental religious verities were clearly apprehended, the notions of the separate state of the soul, of Divine retribution, and of immortality, may have been much more distinct and luminous than we sometimes imagine. There seems little doubt but that the whole of the Israelitish people, at the time of the Exodus, must have been perfectly conversant with the dogmas of the immortality of the soul and a future life of retribution. The Jews evidently believed that when men died, their souls in the unseen state were subject to a solemn scrutiny before the bar of God; and, according as they proved worthy or wanting when weighed in the balance of eternal truth, they were adjudged to degradation and misery or to happiness and honour. Indeed, the Mosaic history and legislation give abundant proof that the doctrine of immortality, both on the part of the bad and the good, was one of the strongest elements of their religious belief. If the institute of Moses had nothing to do with this doctrine; if it did not pre-suppose, uphold, enlarge

and give new practical significance to this article of religion and morals,—it becomes a colossal and unwieldly engine to influence man (in the case of the ungodly) only for a 'terminable' existence. We might almost add, that it involves an enormous and unparalleled waste of Divine interference, and it is wholly out of keeping, as well with the principles of God's government of the world, as with the drift and scope of the volume which chronicles its history. And thus we conclude that Moses taught the doctrine of the soul's immortality with a reality and a force perhaps unexampled in these modern times. 'In that awful interview between God and Moses, recorded in Exodus, where Moses prays, that if Israel were not pardoned, his name, like that of other sinners, might be blotted from the book which God had written,' we have a revelation of immortality and a future life of rewards and punishments, 'which, while it is purely incidental, is as clear as it is blessed and tremendous.' Job also teaches plainly that man's spiritual essence does not perish, but remains after his death, and is gathered back into the hands of Him who gave it understanding. Never, in any single case, does Job indicate that death is the extinction of man's being; and he is most

distinct and clear on the subject of retribution, —the life to come is retributive alike for well-doers and for evil-doers. It intimates most plainly that human souls after death receive blessing or cursing according to their deeds. Thus the Old Testament gives us the germ of the doctrine for which we contend.

Those who plead for *conditional immortality* must remember that their position implies *unconditional mortality* in the case of man's spiritual essence.

This is a philosophic absurdity. Strictly speaking, even matter itself cannot be thus destroyed. Science indicates that we must be careful in talking about destruction in the sense of annihilation. With the facts and teachings of science before us respecting organized bodies, which, for aught we know to the contrary, may have in their elements the stamp of immortality, ought we not to pause before we predicate against the *natural immortality* of the human soul. If matter is such a mystery, what must spirit be? The soul is simple and uncompounded in its essence; it is indivisible, an immaterial substance; and therefore indissoluble and indestructible. It will require nothing less than an effort of omnipotence to produce its anni-

hilation, for no established law could reach it.* The theory of annihilation is, that the impenitent and unsaved will, at some future period, have a termination of their sufferings by a termination of their very being,—their conscious nature becoming a nonentity. Looked at in the light of divine government, as displayed in the current order of things, annihilation strikes us as highly improbable, because the *analogy of nature is against it.* In the whole field of observation there is no instance of annihilation in the strict sense of the word. The advocates of the theory seem to confound all entity with its temporary or accidental condition.

The thing continues after a particular state of it has ceased. All physical science proceeds on the principle that, with all the infinitude of changes throughout the universe, no portion of matter is reduced to nonentity. It is a change only in its relative state, not annihilation of its entity,—the termination, not of being, but of a particular *mode* of being.

Nor is there a single phenomenon in natural death to indicate the annihilation of that spiritual entity we call 'the soul.' Our ignorance of its immortality would afford no ground for inferring its mortality. The

* See Mr. Randles' Essay, *For Ever.*

inference would be rather in the opposite direction; for, admitting the soul's present existence, it is fair to assume, in the absence of proof to the contrary, that, notwithstanding great modifications, there is no cessation of being.

The notion of the *natural mortality* of the soul is imported into this controversy as a weight in the scale of absolute cessation of being. This, to be of any use to annihilationism, must mean either that there is some power or principle in the soul which sooner or later will terminate its existence, or that, according to the order and plan by which God rules nature, the soul will be brought to nothing by *His will and power*. 'Science certainly confutes the first supposition, while reason and analogy and, as we believe, revelation confute the other.

'Then why speak of the mortality of the soul as a tendency to annihilation of its very essence, while mortality of the body is only a tendency to a certain change in its non-essential properties? The phrase, "Natural mortality of the soul," is ambiguous, and consequently misleading. Employed in a sense analogous to the natural mortality of the body, it can have no bearing on the question of annihilation, and is therefore

worse than useless. Employed in a totally different sense, as denoting the soul's inherent and necessary approach to nonentity, it insinuates a false analogy, and predicates of the soul what a true analogy condemns. Respecting the destruction of the soul by the will and power of God, nature gives not the slightest intimation of it, and, as far as God's will can be read by His present method of government, the foregoing observations show its improbability.

'More unlikely still appears the soul's utter extinction when its *superiority* of nature is considered. If there be no sign of an absolute end of a single atom of matter, how much less may we expect the literal annihilation of a spirit whose nature is so much more nearly akin to that of God Himself! Defilement of character may entail loss of happiness, but does not destroy the spirituality of its essence.

'And for God to extinguish its being would be a greater undoing of His former work, and therefore a less likely thing to occur, than to extinguish the essence of unthinking matter.

'The conclusion is, that nature, consulted on the question of the literal annihilation of human souls, wicked or otherwise, utters not

a syllable in its favour, but a considerable testimony *on the other side*.'

It is assumed by the vast majority of those who contend for conditional immortality, 'that the "orthodox" view of the duration of punishment is founded essentially on the doctrine of the *natural and necessary immortality of the soul*.

'This is a mistake which vitiates much of their adverse reasoning. The question is not, whether God *can* annihilate the soul He has created, but *will* He? Looking at power abstractedly, He has the natural ability to do many things which we are certified He will not do. By the immortality of the soul we do not mean that we know God has no power to end its existence, but that it cannot be ended by any power of its own, or of any other creature, and that God wills its ceaseless continuance. Such immortality granted, it becomes a foundation-stone of an argument for eternal punishment. But, *not* granted, the doctrine of endless punishment, proved by the testimony of Scripture, remains, and becomes the foundation-stone of an argument for the immortality of the soul. Both lines of reasoning are sound: the first making the doctrine of the soul's immortality subservient to that of eternal punishment; the second

resting the truth of eternal punishment on direct revelation, and from that inferring the soul's immortality. We could afford to waive all argumentation on the natural immortality of the soul from mental phenomena, and stake the issue on God's Word.

'Our chief basis of evidence is Scripture, not nature. We concur with those who say the soul of man is constituted immortal, and therefore the punishment denounced against the wicked soul must be for ever; but it is equally true and more important to say,—God reveals that the wicked shall suffer for ever, and the righteous be happy for ever; and therefore both must exist for ever.

'The doctrine of annihilation seems to us to be shut out beforehand by the distinct revelation of everlasting punishment!'

We thus conclude that the doctrine of annihilation is destitute of a single claim to human credence, that it is disowned by the voice of reason and analogy, and, as we shall hereafter see, condemned by the Word of God.

CHAPTER IV.

RESPONSIBILITY THE BASIS OF JUDGMENT.

It will not be denied that all the teachings of Scripture are based on the doctrine of human responsibility.

Every man is conscious of his moral freedom, and all the 'arguments against consciousness are only as the breathing of an infant against the granite hills!' Keeping in view this fact of responsibility, it is one of the most strange and subtle workings of sceptical minds to sit in judgment and determine what God ought to be or to do with the beings who rebel against Him.

The abuse of moral freedom both on the part of angels and men is clearly revealed to us in the Word of God.

The Apostle Jude gives us the most definite information respecting the origin of moral evil. 'The angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, He hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.'

'It is difficult to understand the prompting motive in the sin of the first sinner. Man as an innocent being was tempted to evil. But in the case of angels, all within and all without was in favour of holiness. The whole current of inward feeling and the whole tide of outward circumstances flowed in favour of *obedience to the Divine will!*' *

The passage quoted implies a wilful disobedience on the part of the angels in discontent of 'their first estate,' and in seeking something not given to them 'left their own habitation.'

Whether there is any *reserve* in the Divine mind respecting these fallen intelligences, it is not for us to decide. Human reason, arguing on the lines of God's moral government of men, might be led to predicate a redemption even for fallen angels (indeed, this is part of the creed of those who embrace the 'rampant delusion of universalism'). It might be said, Why should the divine Being violate the principles of His moral government which have guided Him in the treatment of men by refusing redemption, and consequently a second probation, to fallen angels? It should not be forgotten that angels were the '*originators* of moral evil; they were the

* Dr. Thomas.

first to entertain rebellious thoughts, the first to renounce their allegiance to Heaven, the first to break the peace and harmony of creation!' There is certainly 'nothing in the process of judgment described by Jude to indicate that the bonds will ever be removed. Indeed, if they were, "everlasting chains" would be a misnomer. Judgment, alas! for the guilty will only rivet, not break, the bonds. This passage certifies the unlimited continuance of the penalty incurred by fallen angels, and, by parity of reasoning, augments the probability of the same dire future for lost men. The next verse, which describes the judgments of Sodom and Gomorrah, plainly teaches this terrible truth. The inhabitants are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire!'

'Jude qualifies *life* in the twenty-first verse by the same term as *fire* in the seventh. It would be a reckless disregard of consistency to make him mean limited duration in the one case and unlimited in the other. As the one is allowed to signify endless life, we naturally take the other to signify *endless fire*. The fact of the angelic disobedience being thus revealed, and the responsibility of angels being thus shown by the judgment to which they became liable, we are also in-

formed that the sin of men will be subject to the same judgment as the sin of angels: the sin in both cases being disobedience or rebellion against God.'

This judgment in the case of man depends upon the abuse of that responsibility with which God has endowed him. In the Scriptures there is set before the wicked, on the one hand the abounding denunciations of judgment against sin, and on the other the invitations of the Gospel to seek and find forgiveness, with the assurance that pardon will be surely granted to all who penitently and sincerely ask it. Thus a further trial of man is ordained, in which a new life and death are set before him, and he is finally judged according to his choice; while the judgment which falls upon the finally impenitent is an eternal monument of the evil of sin.

But it is said: 'How can a Being of perfect love create vast numbers of intelligent creatures, capable of largest happiness, with the certain foresight that the result of that creation will be their everlasting misery?' The answer is: Because a God of perfect love may in the creation of intelligent and responsible creatures, with freedom of will to obey or disobey, have a high, a holy, and a

divinely loving purpose, which is gloriously fulfilled in those who choose obedience, although those who choose to disobey are overwhelmed in righteous judgment. If beings are created with freedom of choice, they may disobey; if the possibility of disobedience to obey be shut out, the creature must be under constraint, without any freedom of will. This would be a creature of another order, not self-governed, not responsible. The obedience of such a creature would not be voluntary, but of necessity constrained; there would be no choice in it, no reality. The service would not be rendered because the mind discerns and the will delights to recognise the essential loveliness of the God whom the creature worships, but a constrained worship, in which the mind may discern much that is lovely, but in which the will has no choice.*

Can it be said to be incompatible with a perfect love in the Creator to make a creature and bestow upon him such freedom of will, that the service and the worship he may render to his God must, if he render it, be his own free choice. And does the perfect love

* See *God's Purpose in Judgment*, by R. Baxter, Esq., containing a brief but convincing defence of orthodox Christianity.

of the Creator in the slightest degree prevent Him from governing and dealing with that creature by the holy and just and loving laws of righteousness.

The creature possessed of a freedom of will is justly held responsible for the exercise of it. If we permit ourselves to think that a perfect love in the Creator must involve the prevention of an evil choice in the creature endowed with free will, we unconsciously assume the freedom of will is to be constrained, and to cease to be free. 'The revealed ground of the sentence of condemnation is given by our Lord Himself in these words, "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not unto Me." It is the absence of works and fruits of love which is made the ground of their fearful doom. Thus the excellency of a pure and perfect love is taught, and confirmed by the severity of the sentence for which the absence of that love is the one cause assigned by the Judge Himself. It follows that the Judge who pronounces the sentence is perfect in love.'

Strange it seems that this language, which vindicates God's perfect love even in the judgment of the sinner, was uttered by a leader in the ranks of universalism.

He then goes on to argue that there must

be in God's heart a love to the sinner He thus condemns; in fact, inventing a theory that love must rest alike on the righteous and the wicked, and therefore ultimately there must be mercy to both.

This theory overlooks the eternal and essential difference between righteousness and wickedness: that the first is essentially lovely, and the last essentially unlovely; the first, that which attracts love, the last, that which repels it. Sin is not an abstract thing; in the common parlance of the day, not merely *objective* but necessarily *subjective*. Sin is the wrongful act of an intelligent and responsible being, and this responsibility is the foundation of judgment: 'He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.'

CHAPTER V.

ETERNITY OF THE JUDGMENT.

The difficulty with a certain class of annihilationists is not with the *judgment* inflicted upon the finally impenitent, but with the *duration* of the judgment. It is admitted that 'suffering as surely follows sin as shadow attends substance in the light of the sun. The infliction of penalty may not be immediate, but it is sure. The wages of sin, if not received now, will have to be received in the future. But while the *certainty* of future punishment admits of no doubt, its *nature* and *degree* may be matters of question. It is to the latter that attention is particularly directed. *What will be the duration of this punishment? Will it be limited in its continuance, or will it be absolutely and necessarily endless.*' The views* which underlie these statements are not new in their conception, they are only a revival of the theories of the

* The terms 'views,' 'theories,' etc., are simply used to avoid tautology.

gnostics and mystics, of ancient days, and we believe them to be utterly irreconcilable with the plain statements of God's Word. But they are brought forward in such a manner, supported by misapplied passages of Scripture, by unwarrantable representations of the 'orthodox' faith, and by plausible speculations on the divine government which appeal to the emotional side of our nature, that they not only mislead the unconverted—ever ready to cherish any idea which lessens the infinite evil of sin—but also ensnare and beguile many sincere believers. Thus the hazy and phenomenal sentiment which floated in the minds of the ancients is enshrined and crystallized into a prominent article of religious belief, which may be an ideal of what God's judgment should be (in the estimation of the annihilationists), but not a type of what that judgment *really is*. This state of mind may be attributable to a false estimate of the infinite evil of sin, as well as to incorrect views of the divine government. The author of *Ecce Deus* has a powerful analogical argument on the 'orthodox' side of the question. And though, as Mr. Randles has shown, the argument respecting the arrangements of human society is not strictly parallel with the arrangements which characterize

God's moral government of the impenitent, yet it is complete as far as it goes, and as far as it was evidently *intended* to go, for the author is careful to state that 'society does in its *degree* precisely what God is declared to do.'

We are perfectly justified in drawing an analogical inference from the condition of human society as to the laws which will obtain in the eternal state. We cannot do better than embody the pith of the argument referred to, especially as just at the time we write the author has openly declared his firm belief in the *distinct personal immortality of the human soul.*

'The constitution of human society throws much light on the awful mystery of endless punishment. It will not be denied, at the outset, that there are many persons whom a virtuous man would not admit to his confidence or hospitality. Ask the reason, and the answer will be, "The persons have lost their good character, and are altogether unworthy of respect or confidence." Here then is a point to begin at. It is conceded by this answer, that purity of character is the indispensable qualification for admission into virtuous society, and by so much it is shown that a bad man is "damned" socially solely

on the ground of vice. So far, then, we find society doing exactly what God does: viz., drawing a broad line of demarcation between the virtuous and the vicious; in other words, *establishing a system of rewards and punishments based exclusively on morals.* Society has found this to be necessary to its own preservation and prosperity, for all history has gone to show that, apart from every theological system, the *moral element* has always determined the true value of civilization. Virtue has meant safety, vice has meant danger. This is a fact of immense value in an inductive inquiry respecting rewards and punishments.

'It is now proposed to show that in the matter of endless punishment for sin society does, in its degree, precisely what God is declared to do. If God punishes the finally impenitent for ever, man does the same thing, and does it *necessarily*,—necessarily, because of the demands of the moral universe without, as well as the exactions of the moral principle within. In other words, the very constitution of the moral universe demands and necessitates the endless punishment of the impenitent. But it is objected that there is no proportion between time and eternity, and consequently, that to punish man eternally for doing wrong

in his short lifetime is inequitable. While it is not denied that punishment is merited, it is contended that there should be some proportion between the crime and the penalty. In answer to this objection, let us examine the law of proportion in the light of social laws. Does the idea of proportion amount roughly to this, that a day's crime should be met by a day's punishment; that a man who does wrong to-day should be punished to-morrow, and restored to confidence the day after. The objector will probably say, "No, not exactly that; but say that a day's crime should be met by a month's punishment, or a year's; only let there be some proportion between the crime and the penalty." The answer does not relieve the difficulty. What is the moral proportion between a day and a month, or one day and a year? Does nothing depend on the nature of the crime? We answer, Everything. Let this be granted; then it will appear that the proportion is really not one of time but of *turpitude*. In reality, society proceeds upon the principle that the extent of time occupied in the perpetration of a criminal act is not to be taken into account in considering the punishment which is to be awarded. Nor ought it to be accounted of. Less time may be occupied in taking away a

life than in committing a burglary; but on the principle of strict proportion (which sophistically proceeds on the idea of mere duration) the burglar should undergo a longer punishment than the murderer. But society will not allow this; its moral instincts overrule its sentimentalities, and demand that the gravity of the crime should determine the gravity of the punishment. Man's own heart being witness, he proceeds upon the very principle of adjudication which he condemns in the government of God. The sum of the answer is this: if a criminal continues to be impenitent respecting any crime, he is as guilty of that crime on the last day of his life as he was in the very hour of its committal, though he may have survived that hour fifty years. Time has no mitigating influence upon guilt. The question between the criminal and society is not one of *time* but of *penitence;* and, so long as he is impenitent, society must, by a compulsion deeper than all formal law, mark its sense of the fact. Society does this.

'If particular members of society do not do so, they are immoral,—connivance with unrepented guilt being an affront to the spirit of virtue.

'Society punishes (more or less lightly, more or less directly) all impenitent offenders

against its laws, and punishes them throughout their whole lifetime, which is as much of eternity as its retributive influence can encompass.

'In very grave cases indeed, society will not allow the penal shadow to pass from the reputation, even after death. So truly is this the case, that there are names which cannot now be pronounced, though they represent long-extinct lives, without bringing a frown upon the countenances of all who hear them. Does not this foreshadow the doctrine of endless punishment? The law of proportion, founded on mere duration, is a *palpable fallacy*. Society happily forgets its former logic when under the influence of high moral inspiration, and in its own arbitraments reproduces the government of God. A second objection will afford an opportunity of still further exposing the fallacy of the argument of proportion. It has been urged that, as virtue is its own reward, and vice its own punishment, the criminal is sufficiently punished while on earth, and need not, therefore, have hell superadded. The argument, if valid in relation to hell, is equally valid in relation to heaven; hence, as virtue is its own reward, the virtuous man is sufficiently rewarded on earth, and needs not a superadded heaven.

By parity of reasoning, this latter position is impregnable. The logic which closes hell annihilates heaven. Why be startled by the announcement that the bad man shall go away into everlasting punishment? Society has actually affirmed the principle in its own penal arrangements; why, then, be shocked at its own moral instincts? The shock is occasioned by the word 'eternal,' rather than the word 'punishment'; that punishment will be mental, not physical—an eternal self-reproach for having given God the lie. Those who plead against eternal punishment often talk as though no mercy had been shown to the sinner, as if mercy were an orb reserved upon the uttermost darkness to show the way to heaven.

'Such a suggestion is a grave reflection upon the plan of salvation; it plainly, though indirectly, charges the plan with incompleteness, if not with injustice.'

We have thus given the substance of an argument which, while it clearly proves the infinite evil of sin, and the character of judgment, at the same time defends the moral government of God from the aspersions which are indirectly, if not directly, thrown upon it. Mr. Randles works out some of these points in a calm and convincing manner. 'While

sin deserves punishment as sin, it is pertinent to ask *how much it deserves.*

'It is easier to ask than to answer this question. Who shall tell us the exact demerit of sin as against God? There is nothing in nature to determine its precise measure,—a fact which may well rebuke the audacity of those who presume to define the limits within which the all-wise Governor must administer retribution.

'It is often argued that because eternal punishment exceeds sin's desert, the just God cannot have appointed it. We deem it more conclusive to argue that, because the Just God has appointed eternal punishment, it cannot exceed sin's desert. The former reasoning fails in its premises.

'The objection that the effect of sin cannot be infinite, because the perpetrator is a finite being, is more of a *quibble* than an argument.

'The act of a finite being may have consequences without termination (and that is the import of the word *infinite* applied to the penal effect of sin). The man and the act are finite, but the consequence unending; then is it not as conceivable that the finite act of a finite being who rejects the Gospel may have an infinite—that is, an interminable consequence?

'It is persistently asked, "Is it just to hinge eternal misery on man's conduct during this short existence?" A little reflection may remind the questioner that the punishment due is not in proportion to the temporal length of the sin, but to its intrinsic evil in the sight of God. Inherent *quality* more than temporal *quantity* decides the moral deserts. The atoning work of Christ was brief, yet its merit is never judged by that standard that merit will be infinite in its duration. *The demerit of sin will be alike endless.*'

How the doctrine of limited punishment derogates and disparages the work of Christ! This view assumes that He only died to deliver the sinner from a limited evil. Does not the atonement predicate the eternity of judgment?

As disease is necessary to the art of the physician, so the doctrines of grace would never have existed but for the awful doctrine of eternal punishment.

CHAPTER VI.

WHAT SAITH THE SCRIPTURE?

According to a pamphlet recently extensively circulated (being sent to every Christian minister in the United Kingdom, and to every English missionary in the world), very little is said in Scripture respecting this doctrine of eternal judgment, 'Can anything, for instance, be more ridiculously perverse than to begin by taking the phrase "everlasting punishment," which is only found once in a very difficult parable, and attempting to decide the question upon that?'

We might retort by asking, 'Can anything be more ridiculously perverse than the state of mind indicated by the language quoted?' We venture to assert that a great deal is said in other passages of Scripture respecting this matter. Nor do we agree with the character given by this amiable man to the narrative of Dives and Lazarus. It is one of the most definite and continuous of the Saviour's utterances about the eternal world. The

doctrine of everlasting punishment is taught in several passages of Scripture in the most emphatic manner, in language the most solemn and impressive that can be conceived. We hold that the proper meaning of the word '*aionios*,' as used in the passages referred to, is '*everlasting*,' in contrast with that which exists for a limited period. But the most conclusive proof in support of this position is derived from the use which the Holy Spirit makes of the word throughout the New Testament. In it, the word *aionios* is used seventy-one times; three times in reference to the past, when it is applied to periods measured by ages.* But in the remaining sixty-eight passages it is applied forty-two times to life (eternal life as the gift of God), twice to the Lord Jesus Christ, once to God, once to the power of God, once to the Holy Spirit, fourteen times it is used to express the duration of future bliss, and seven times it is applied to the duration of the future judgment of the wicked.† But we are not left to a few passages for the establishment of this truth. There are also other words

* See a tract entitled *The Doctrines of Annihilation and Universalism Tested by Holy Scripture.* S. W. Partridge & Co.

† See Matt. xviii. 8, xxv. 41, 46; Mark iii. 29; 2 Thess. i. 9; Heb. vi. 2; and Jude 7.

and forms of words used in the Greek Testament which are translated 'for ever' and 'for ever and ever,' and each of these forms of expression is used to denote the duration of the existence of God, the duration of the blessedness of the righteous, and the duration of the punishment of the impenitent.

1. εις τον αιωνα, for ever: 'The Son abideth for ever' (John viii. 35); 'Whoso eateth of this bread shall live for ever' (John vi. 51); 'To whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever' (Jude 13).

2. εις τους αιωνας των αιωνων, for ever and ever: 'God who *liveth for ever and ever*' (Rev. xv. 7); 'They shall *reign for ever and ever*' (Rev. xxii. 5); 'The smoke of their torment ascendeth *for ever and ever*' (Rev. xiv. 11). εις αιωνας αιωνων: 'And her smoke rose up *for ever and ever*' (Rev. xix. 3); 'The devil, the beast, and the false prophet shall be *tormented for ever and ever*' (Rev. xx. 10).

The words (εις τον αιωνα) which are translated 'for ever' are sometimes used to express the duration of a thing in uninterrupted continuance, although in its nature it may not last for ever. But in such a case they are used to denote the longest period of which the subject is capable. Hence they are used to

INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN
GRADUATE UNIVERSITY

express the whole of any particular period, as the whole of a man's life, the whole course of this world, the whole of a dispensation. But the proper etymological meaning of the terms is 'for ever,' the word *aion* being compounded of two other words, which mean *always existing* (αει, always, and ων, being or existing), and by the best authorities means *eternity* in the strictest sense. The form of expression which is translated 'for ever and ever' occurs twenty times in the New Testament; sixteen times it relates to the being or glory of God, once to the blessedness of the righteous, and in the other three passages (quoted above) it is applied to the punishment of the lost.

Here then is no uncertainty and no qualification. The duration of punishment is expressed by the same words as the duration of blessedness and as the existence of God. We cannot suppose that the Spirit of God would use these words seventeen times to express *absolute eternity*, and three times to express *limited duration*.

If God will love 'for ever and ever,' we are compelled by the same Divine authority to believe that the punishment of the wicked will be 'for ever and ever.'

We admit that any argument built on purely exegetical grounds would carry but

little weight with some who plead against the doctrine of eternal judgment. We remember to have seen a statement that they were not to be ruled out of court by 'Greek particles;' they had a broader foundation on which to build. The foundation may be *broader*, but is it more *sure?* Such a sentiment is really a denial of Inspiration, and if carried out would root up the foundations of 'revealed Truth.'

A tract now lying before us, and freely circulated in this neighbourhood, contains a statement by Archbishop Whately on this question. 'It is certain,' says Dr. Whately, 'that the words "life," "eternal life," "immortality," etc., are always applied to the condition of those, and of those only, who shall at the last day be approved as "good and faithful servants who are to enter into the joy of their Lord!"' But did not the bishop utter other words in support of the orthodox view? He admits that never ending punishment is a sense which some of the passages of Scripture will certainly bear, and that such would 'perhaps be their most obvious and natural meaning if these expressions were the only ones on the subject which are to be found in Scripture.'

The fallacy underlying this last sentence is clearly shown by Dr. Angus. 'Men speak,'

says he, 'of this restricted meaning of "everlasting," as if it were quite common in Scripture, whereas it is really rare, even in the Old Testament, while in the New Testament it is questionable whether it is found at all.'

But upon the interpretation of our Lord's words (Matthew xxv.), 'These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal,' Dr. Whately is most conclusive on the orthodox side: 'Some have ventured first to conjecture, and afterwards confidently to teach, that the condemnation of the wicked in the next world will not be final—which they contend is inconsistent with the goodness of God,—and that all will be brought at length to immortal happiness. Now, whether this their doctrine be true or not, I scruple not to say that it is highly presumptuous in any one to assert it, since it is wholly unwarranted by Scripture; and therefore, even if their opinion be right, they cannot possibly *know* it to be right. The expressions used in speaking of the rewards of the faithful and of the punishment of the disobedient are the very same, denoting that they no have end; as for example, 'These shall go away into everlasting punishment,' etc. Have we any warrant in Scripture for saying that the same word is to be interpreted

literally in one part of the sentence, and in the other figuratively (*Future State*, pp. 216, 217). Can we suppose that our Lord, who was the impersonation of truth itself, would mislead by using the *same* word in the *same* sentence in two widely different, if not opposite, senses? No; whatever it means in one case it must mean in the other. If it means 'everlasting' when applied to life, it must mean 'everlasting' when applied to punishment.

* 'The supreme solemnity of the Saviour's theme would preclude, if other things did not, all tendency to ambiguous and misleading phraseology. Lifting the veil from the final ordeal when the destinies of men shall be pronounced according to character, He might not deem it needful to state all the exact method of proceeding, but on the question of a limited or an unlimited doom, between which there is an inconceivable disparity, He would be least likely to leave any room for doubt. If anywhere we might especially expect Him to reveal the length of future punishment, it would seem to be here, near the close of His public ministry, discoursing on the great judgment of mankind; and here He *does* gravely and earnestly declare it

* Randles.

everlasting. The drift of the address was to persuade men to prepare for the solemn day of reckoning; and to place before them most powerful motives, arising from the awards of a future life, accorded with that design. If the punishment be not eternal, He plied His audience with an exaggerated and unwarrantable motive. If it be eternal, the appeal to their fears of endless suffering was as just and true in itself as it was suited to the design of the discourse. The notion of limited punishment is refuted by the juxtaposition of the expression with the promise of life eternal. Manifestly, in Christ's view, the righteous and the wicked, being opposite in character, shall inherit opposite states; and being both immortal, those states shall, in both cases, be co-extensive with their being. "Eternal punishment and eternal life" form a complete and striking antithesis, which becomes mutilated and incongruous when changed into eternal life and temporary punishment.

'The twisting of the word into two meanings is altogether inadmissible. The punishment and the life are both limited or both perpetual. Say they are both limited, though called eternal, and, in consistency, similar violence would have to be used with the many other precious promises of eternal life, thus

cramping the hopes of God's people by stripping their richest pledges of joy in heaven of more than half their value.

'"The logic which closes hell annihilates heaven." We are therefore driven back upon the commonly accepted view that Jesus teaches eternal life and eternal punishment with equal appositeness, fulness, and emphasis.'

In the tract before quoted, there is an attempt to lessen the force of that passage, 'Where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched,' by an allusion to Gehenna, or Valley of Hinnom, where decaying animal refuse bred worms, and where fires burned to counteract the nuisance. Surely, none but a feeble exponent of Scripture 'would imagine that valley to be *all* Jesus meant as the alternative of the "Kingdom of God."'

'Gehenna, as the image of hell, represents the intensity of its misery by the worm and the fire, and the *perpetuity* of that misery is discovered by the *deathlessness* of the worm and the *quenchlessness* of its fire. In fact, the literal eternity of Gehenna was not necessary to enable Christ therewith to illustrate the literal eternity of future suffering. On the point of finality the analogy implied in the allusion is that, as there was no remedy in the

valley for the substances cast therein, so neither will there be any for the souls "cast into hell fire." But, besides analogy, there is *antithesis*, in that the worm died and the fire was quenched in the one case, and in the other shall always continue.'

But as the last resort to undermine the doctrine of eternal judgment, it is said that we ought to read the passages: 'Age-lasting life, *instead* of eternal life; age-lasting punishment instead of 'everlasting punishment;' age-lasting fire instead of 'everlasting fire;' age-lasting condemnation instead of 'eternal damnation.'

But after such a process of curtailment, how clipped and shrunken are some of the finest promises to the saints and ascriptions of glory to God!

The many perfections attributed to God 'for ever' are then ascribed only for limited ages: 'God blessed for ever' means blessed for a time; 'Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness' means that it lasts for a while; 'His mercy endureth for ever,' means endureth through certain terminable periods; and the promise of life 'for ever' to believers, amounts to a pledge of life for a long while.

It is hard to suppose sincere and intelligent men could ever take this position,

except to escape the force of those Scriptures which so plainly assert the doctrine which they deny. 'But granting, for the sake of argument, the interpretations as given above, does not the language, 'ages of ages,' or 'ages after ages,' give the idea of an indefinite period, causing the impression of thousands of thousands of years, a period to which the age of the world bears a very small proportion? A little reflection might serve to show that the principle of eternal punishment is recognised in a very large degree. If the judgment of the lost for 'ages of ages' is a righteous judgment, how can the continuance of that judgment make it unjust?

We, therefore, conclude that the Scripture teaches in the plainest terms the doctrine of eternal judgment. This is seen by comparing one text with another, 'by the evident contradistinction of state without any contradistinction of duration.' *Sin required an infinite satisfaction, and consequently deserves an infinite, i.e., an endless, punishment.*

CHAPTER VII.

FALSE ASSUMPTIONS RESPECTING THE JUDGMENT.

STRANGE it seems that men should have entertained the idea that the all-wise Creator and Judge will inflict the same invariable judgment upon all classes of impenitent sinners, no matter what their circumstances or condition.

It is difficult to conceive how men of sincere purpose, with the New Testament in their hands, could have fallen into so grievous a mistake. The 'confusion and self deception' manifest in their reasonings might almost provoke a smile, if it were not in connection with a subject of such deep solemnity; *e.g.*, 'while the destruction of *some* appears to be most plainly revealed, it by no means follows that *all* the human race who pass out of this present life without a knowledge of Christ will therefore likewise perish.

"Are there not millions who, as to knowledge of God and moral responsibility, are in much the same position as children? Not only myriads of heathen, but multitudes in

what are called Christian lands may be included in this class. Have we not in the black alleys of our great cities many whose "faces, eloquent in wretchedness," seem to say, "We did not place ourselves here; were the choice given us freely, we should not be here as we are." Have we not in our rural districts many whose lives are passed in heavy toil, and whose faculties, small at first, remain to a sad extent unexercised and undeveloped? Are there not families in the middle and higher classes where the minds and hearts of the young are left so uninstructed in the truth of God, and are so surrounded by worldly influences, and so absorbed by worldly interests and pleasures, that they live and die in practical heathenism? Is it not also true that there are some whose religious instruction is of such a character that they cannot be said to have been taught "the way of the Lord, or to have had made known to them the glad tidings of the kingdom of God"? In answer to this, we reply, Will not "the Judge of all the earth do right"? Shall any man say to his Maker, "Why hast Thou formed me thus?"

Does not the New Testament teach, "Whatsoever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law"? Have we not placed

before us different degrees of punishment: "Many stripes and few stripes," lighter punishment and sorer punishment?"

There is not much wisdom displayed (but a sad lack of moral insight) in referring to the heathen, and to those within our own civilisation, who have never heard the gospel, and asking, 'Are such to be eternally punished'? This horror is uninformed and unreasoning. No man will be condemned for not believing what he never heard. It is the man who *believeth not* that is to be condemned, and the very terms imply that the case has been laid before him; as for others, they are in the hands of God, and will be adjudged righteously. 'It is better to fall into the hands of God than into the hands of men.'

The principle is one on which we might be sure a just and righteous God would proceed. 'Before one of our judges, in the same court and on the same day, and for the same offence, let two prisoners be tried. Let this be the history of one of them: Cradled in the light and love of a godly home; baptized by a mother's tears, and hallowed by her prayers; warned against the first wrong step; a thousand facilities and entreaties to leave it when taken; the consciousness that two hearts were being trampled on and were

breaking, a father's and a mother's, as the path was still pursued. But let the history of the other be this: Born in a garret in a back street of London, where lives "the crowd that fatten on crime;" the first sounds heard, cursing, and the only education given, vice. Who would say, Let the same sentence be passed on both? A true judge could not help making a distinction; and when we stand before the judgment bar, beside the poor heathen who lived and died in the dense night of heathenism, on which a ray of the gospel never fell, will not the great God make a difference?'

The language which doubts, or assumes the great Judge of heaven and earth will be less discriminating than a poor, erring fellow-creature, is not the language of an enlightened Christian mind.

To oppose or to arouse suspicion of the doctrine of eternal punishment by first inventing then attacking an imaginary picture of indiscriminate judgment is 'like attempting to destroy a worthy man by burning him in effigy.

'As the real man has no identity with the effigy, so our doctrine has none with this ghastly caricature. It no more teaches unconditional destruction than does the theory

of limited punishment. It is unfair to assume it; and we protest against the attempt to make the doctrine of eternal punishment responsible for such teaching. There is nothing in the doctrine itself to necessitate or imply it; and any attack, however triumphant, does not touch either its truthfulness or its equity.

'If eternal punishment did not admit of degrees, neither would eternal rewards. Equality of continuance admits easily of degrees of misery, as fine and as manifold as are the deserts of the condemned. We might have thought this doctrine too obvious to need statement.'*

We reject then, not only as opposed to reason, but as unscriptural, the assumption that the same doom awaits all who are excluded from the presence of God. He 'will judge the world in righteousness.' He 'will render to every man according to *his* deeds,' and will not inflict one stripe undeserved. The character of the great and solemn judgment will be a just retribution in accordance with the light possessed, the sin committed, and the grace despised. In the pamphlet containing the addresses at the 'Cannon-street Hotel,' we have the following passage: 'The doctrine that countless millions

* Randles.

of the human race will be tormented in fire for ever, without either the hope of death or deliverance, is too awful for thought. The very attempt to conceive it agonises the heart, staggers the understanding, and exceeds the capacity of belief. Such an amazing infliction of woe must not be attributed to the merciful and glorious God whom we love and serve, unless He has expressly and unequivocally declared it in so many words. But He has *not* done so. Devout men who wish to believe every doctrine of their Father in heaven; educated men, who are able to examine the languages from which the English version of the Bible is made; Christian men, who feel that their blessed and honourable work on earth is to glorify the Master whom they love,—have made this subject their earnest and prayerful study; and they say, in the sight of God and in the hearing of the world, Out of Christ there is no immortality, and a hell of eternal misery is the most frightful delusion that was ever presented to the human mind. The Judge of all the earth does *right;* but *this* would be *wrong.*' Here we have a strange mixture of caricature, misrepresentation, and presumption—presumption bordering on blasphemy. The old idea of physical torment by literal or material fire has little or nothing

to do with this matter, and the insinuation that the doctrine of eternal judgment is responsible for these views is untrue. We can scarcely read the last sentence without a shudder. God is virtually told that sin does not deserve eternal, punishment, and that He has no right to inflict it. The Almighty is thus arraigned at the bar of human judgment, and told that His moral government of finally impenitent sinners needs to be amended. Can human presumption go further? In the same address we read, 'Surely it cannot be that the commission of Divine compassion, "Go and teach all nations, go and preach the gospel to every creature," was checked and hampered, in case of refusal to accept the gospel, by a penalty so terrific (*viz.*, eternal punishment). The assertion that the Bible teaches this has excited the astonishment of thinking men for many generations, has alienated myriads from the entire Christian system, has made more infidels, secret or avowed, than all other anti-religious influences put together.' There is lying at the root of this language a forgetfulness of the evil of sin: the mind of the writer is so fixed on love and mercy, and with the infirmity of every finite mind of becoming engrossed by the special line of thought which it is pursuing, the

hideousness of sin, and the absolute necessity that a God of infinite holiness must abhor and condemn and punish those who reject the gospel, is forgotten.

The statement that the doctrine of eternal punishment 'has made more infidels than all other anti-religious influences put together' is one of the most monstrous indictments against God's moral government of which we can conceive. The language confutes itself. Human experience is against it. If a man be living in sin, he desires to believe that there is no eternal judgment.

How is it possible for the declaration of this doctrine to promote infidelity? Its moral influence ought certainly to produce an opposite effect. Were the doctrines promulgated by the language we have quoted to be received generally, it would certainly have a tendency to make men careless about eternity. They would say, 'If we are not to be punished eternally but only for a season in the next world, we will risk it, and go on in sin.' Do we not know by the experience of infidels that the fear of eternal punishment alarms them, and, in the majority of cases, prevents their being at ease and satisfied under their infidel beliefs. If it were generally believed that the Bible taught nothing enduring in the con-

demnation of the wicked, infidelity would indeed rejoice and be glad. Let not mortal men by (we fear in some cases) disingenuous efforts distort the judgment of God by such grim misrepresentations of His moral government.

The flippant language we have quoted denies God the right to judge the wicked or to banish those from His presence who have abused their responsibility, neglected salvation, and given themselves up to 'work wickedness.'

We regard the fact of different degrees of punishment as the plainest 'of all possible truths, declared as positively as human language could declare it, and written as with a sunbeam upon the whole face of inspiration.' Those who assume the contrary set up, however unconsciously, an imagination of their own, which has not the shadow of a foundation in the Word of God.

CHAPTER VIII.

JUDGMENT AS IT AFFECTS THE CHARACTER OF GOD.

The important questions, What the Divine Being is? who He is? how He governs the world? what is the meaning of the various qualities ascribed in the Bible to Him? are matters of serious moment. A clear perception of these aspects of the Divine character is absolutely necessary to a right exposition of His moral government of mankind. Correct ideas of God are the foundation of all religious verities; if that is wrong, all is wrong. Misconception here will exert a pernicious influence upon our modes of thought, and cannot fail to harm us. If the radical conception is false, it cannot fail to develop incoherent systems of theology. The central fact of religious truth is God as a Being of infinite holiness, justice, truth, and love. Around these qualities, as an axis of motion, our theology must move. If we lose sight of any one of these qualities our views of His moral government will be incomplete. Some writers string to-

gether a long list of passages declarative of God's goodness, mercy, and love, to prove that the doctrine of eternal punishment is not true, forgetting that all those passages refer either to *character* or *probation*, they are not uttered irrespective of moral conduct. 'God is love,' they say; 'and how can He punish sinners eternally?' The statement of the Apostle John is taken in only one aspect of the Divine character. John does not mean that love is the absolute essence but an attribute of Deity;* he does not mean that God is love, to the exclusion of justice, holiness, or truth, or that He will show His love to each or any created being independent of moral conduct. True! God is disposed to make all His intelligent creatures happy. Take away His benevolence, His disposition to do this, and He could not care whether His creatures were happy or miserable. He would thus regard pain and pleasure, happiness and misery, with indifference at least, or may be, as identical. Reward and punishment would in His government lose all their distinctions, inasmuch as reward implies pleasure and punishment implies pain. If, therefore, pleasure and pain, or reward and punishment, be re-

* See *Homilist* for 1862, p. 111.

garded as equal, or even with indifference, the reward might be enjoyed by the wicked and the punishment might be inflicted upon the innocent, which would be absolutely unjust; so that if God be void of the attribute of love, He cannot be depended upon for the execution of justice, for where there is no love there can be no justice. Take away from His character either justice, truth, holiness, or love, and we have destroyed the symmetry and beauty of the whole. Take away love, and a body without a soul is left behind. It is justice, but no love of justice; truth, but no love of truth; every good quality, but the love of no quality. A Being according to this supposition would be just, but not because there was any excellency in justice, and faithful, but not for truth's sake. Here we are met with the question: 'Can the love of God be seen in the eternal judgment of the wicked?' We have seen that where there is no love there can be no justice. Is it equally true that where there is no justice there can be no love? We reply, Yes; if God were not to punish the wicked He could not be a God of love. God's love is, therefore, the foundation of justice, and justice is a proof of His love. His love of order, truth, goodness, and His desire to secure the happiness of the universe

necessitate the punishment of disobedience. The conclusion is evident; *viz.*, that the love of God is as *truly* seen in the punishment of the wicked as in the salvation of the good, as truly in the pains of hell as in the joys of heaven.' Why reflect, therefore, upon the character of God when He punishes sin? Does He not allow the punishment of sin in the present world? God exercises a general control over the affairs of this life; and is not that government both wise and good? Misery in various forms exists. He permits this misery; but do we implicate His character? No; we blame sin for this state of things. Now, if we act thus in reference to the punishment of sin in this life, how can we justly implicate the character of God respecting everlasting punishment. If such terrible punishment follows sin in the present world, where the revelation of divine love and mercy are manifested in the gospel of Christ; what can we say of hell in the world to come? This state of things on earth, under a probationary government, seems to blunt the edge of the weapon which has been wielded against the orthodox view of judgment. It would be an interesting study if we could trace out in the experience of those who oppose the doctrine in question the various causes which have

led to their present convictions. The difficulty with some would be found to be an *exegetical* one, with others it would be found to be an *intellectual* difficulty; *i.e.*, an importation of something from the exercise of human reason in opposition to the Word of God. But in the vast majority of cases the difficulty would be found to be an *emotional* one. The judicial character of God is lost sight of; the whole moral nature is swamped by sentiment, emotion thus becomes the dominant element, the mind loses its moral fibre, the feelings override the judgment; reason thus swamped by emotion is unfitted to give a correct decision in a matter of such vital importance.

Mr. Randles, towards the conclusion of Chapter IV., shows how delusive is this amiable state of mind, and how all arguments which appeal to the sympathies rather than to the reason must ultimately be swept away. 'Whatever feasibility might appear in the argument from God's goodness or benevolence, it vanishes as soon as we begin to carry out the same mode of reasoning to its legitimate results. If eternal punishment be impossible, because opposed to the divine benevolence, *all* punishment must be equally impossible for the same reason.' Punishment has existed perhaps thousands of ages in the

case of the fallen angels. Strange that God's goodness has not brought it to an end! 'Clearly, it is as difficult to reconcile the existence of any evil with supreme benevolence as it is to reconcile the continuance of evil. It is beside the mark to say that the difficulty is not with the *existence of* evil, but with the *eternity* of evil. The mode of reasoning from our ideas of goodness to the non-eternity of evil, if sound, would be equally forceful against its existence. The only difference is one of degree, not of principle. Tell us how to harmonize goodness with the allowance of pain for a moment, and we can then harmonize it with punishment abiding for ever. If liability to evil was a necessity of moral freedom, liability to perpetual evil may be equally so. There is no denying that if God must forbid the eternity of evil because opposed to His goodness, He must also, on the same ground, have forbidden the entrance of evil into the universe, and its endurance to the present time.'

'The argument from God's goodness against eternal punishment is further fallacious in assuming that the appointment of such a penalty is not and cannot be in any degree the effect of goodness. It may be justly penal to the sufferers, and yet benevolently

exemplary to others. Were not the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah "set forth for an *example*, suffering the vengeance," etc.?'

But it is said 'eternal punishment is a moral impossibility.' One writer endeavours to demonstrate the opposition of the doctrine to God's love by a comparison, thus: 'Two and two make four; . . . if all the arithmeticians in the world assured you that two and two made five, you would not believe them.' To the compatibility of eternal punishment with the existence of a perfectly loving and blessed God, he simply replies, 'that you might as well try to persuade me that two and two make five, or that the three angles of a triangle are equal to four right angles.' 'How strange,' says Mr. Randles, 'that the fallacy of this attempted parallel could escape its author's attention! All the sophistry in the world could not induce a considerable minority of civilised men to think two and two are five. But a vast proportion do believe in the truth of eternal punishment. We know that belief in it is *intellectually possible*, because it is so extensively *actual*, and that the thing believed is morally possible, because it is in no way discordant with the known perfections of the supreme Governor.'

This doctrine is a powerful appeal to the passion of fear, and as such is a strong incentive to seek mercy. How many instances have we in the Scriptures of this fact! But notwithstanding the terrible threatenings against sinners, multitudes are still undeterred from wrong doing, and if these awful unfoldings of the doom of the impenitent have been insufficient to restrain the wickedness of men, what excesses of ungodliness might not have been the result if the future that awaits the evil-doer had been but partially disclosed in a less severe and striking manner. 'The higher the threatening runs, so much the more mercy and goodness there is in it.' The men who have been most useful in the Church have been believers in this doctrine.

In the condemnation of eternal punishment on the ground of God's goodness, human sympathy or emotion lies at the root. 'To test the doctrine by the *purest* and *noblest* emotions of sympathy is to apply an *inappropriate standard*. If human sympathy were to rule, it would not only forbid eternal suffering but all suffering. Equity is often absent from the strongest sympathy. Those who believe this doctrine are sometimes accused of want of sympathy. It is said we can "complacently contemplate a dogma which

declares the eternal torments of myriads of our fellow human beings;" other language might be quoted even stronger still. This, to use the mildest term, is most *unfair*. Nay, it is untrue, respecting the great body of Christian people. Our accusers are most inconsistent: "If we are solemnized by the stupendous import of the doctrine, they charge us with gloomy despair. If we are cheerful in the contemplation of happier themes, they charge us with insincerity of belief, or indifference to the woes and perils of our race." We acknowledge the painful nature of this doctrine in *contemplation*. But are not these charges made in such a manner as to insinuate that our belief in the doctrine makes it true, when, in point of fact, neither our belief nor their unbelief has anything to do with the matter? And in a certain sense "* God does not inflict the punishment, He simply points out a result which must follow sinful courses. Men often complain as if the misery were superimposed by God; it is not, it comes out of the man, not from God. In this representation on the part of God there is nothing arbitrary, it simply points out the inevitable operation of cause and effect. It must not be forgotten that there is a broad distinction

* Dr. Parker.

between a penalty and a consequence, as those terms are commonly understood.

'When Christ said, "He that believeth not shall be damned," He announced a consequence, He did not threaten a penalty in the usual acceptation of the term. A consequence is the direct and inevitable result of certain processes, partaking of their very nature and inseparable from them; but a penalty may possibly be something different, something arbitrarily superadded, regardless of adaptation or measure. Being chilled is a consequence of exposure to cold air, but being flogged for such exposure is a penalty. Eternal punishment is the consequence of rejecting the gospel, not a penalty (in the low sense of revenge) *attached to a crime*.'

This gives us a view of the redemptive work of Christ as saving man from the dire consequences of his own folly. It presents, too, an impressive aspect of human dignity and responsibility. 'Would Christ have died to save an insect which otherwise would have been crushed into nothingness?' (according to the annihilation theory.) Reason, analogy, and revelation say, No.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DOCTRINE OF ANNIHILATION.

THE denial of the doctrine of eternal punishment necessarily leads to a belief in the doctrine of *annihilation; i.e.*, the extinction of the human soul by the will and power of God. We have already seen that *nature* gives no countenance to this doctrine, and we believe that God's Word, rightly interpreted, affords no ground to suppose that He will ever *annihilate* a single soul.

Of those who maintain the doctrine of *annihilation*, there are some who hold that the soul of the wicked ceases to exist at death, whilst others say that it lives for a time, enduring a consuming punishment, by which, after a certain period, longer or shorter, it will be blotted out of existence. 'As to the nature and duration and severity of the suffering which will have been undergone by the finally impenitent before the last moment of their existence, or as to the means by which, and the circumstances under which, they will

be put out of existence, *we know very little indeed.*'*

By these persons it is maintained that death is 'the wages of sin,' and that death is ceasing to exist, or annihilation. The Scriptures abound with useful figures and instructive metaphors. Sometimes they speak to us in language so obviously literal, that to understand it as figurative would completely destroy its meaning, and on the contrary, to understand many other passages as literal would end in the same disastrous result. A correct knowledge of Scripture phraseology is indispensably necessary in order to avoid mistakes and fully comprehend the lessons taught. We must therefore endeavour to attribute a definite meaning to the terms (life and death) used. As an authority for the opinion that the term *death* means annihilation, the well-known passage in Ezekiel is quoted: 'The soul that sinneth, it shall die.' We must examine into the Scriptural meaning of the word *soul*, and also ascertain what is meant by *death*. The word *soul* in this passage, it is said, means the vital principle. In a pamphlet before us we have these words: 'God solemnly affirms, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die," "O wicked man, thou shalt surely die." We must

* See *Report of Conference at Cannon Street Hotel.*

then understand this word in its primary signification, as every one understands it when applied to the body: cessation of existence.'

Here we have a sample of the way in which Scripture phraseology is misunderstood. We admit that the word *soul* is used in Scripture to denote the vital principle, but it is also frequently used to indicate an individual. Thus Peter speaks of eight *souls* in the ark; there were added to them about three thousand *souls;* threescore and fifteen *souls.* These passages are sufficient to show that the word 'soul' in Scripture, as in ordinary conversation, is frequently used for a *person;* and in this sense we maintain it is used in the passage referred to. That which the passage teaches is, that God *will deal with each individual according to his deserts*, as the words which *immediately* follow prove: 'The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son.' Each shall suffer for his own sins; and from the tenor of the chapter it is obvious that the prophet refers to death in the ordinary sense, as the cutting short of life in this world. As to the noun '*death*,' or the verb '*to die*,' we maintain that, applied to man, *they never mean absolute ceasing to exist*, but simply ceasing to exist *in the state in which he was living.*

The word *death* in Scripture is used in three senses:

(1.) It is used to express the separation of the soul and the body, the cessation of life on earth in the union of body and soul. In this sense, the word is used in its common acceptation, well understood by all. This may be termed *natural* death.

(2.) It is used to express separation from God; *viz.*, the state of one who is not *spiritually alive*, one who, in the language of Scripture, is '*dead* in trespasses and sins.' Thus it is written, 'She that liveth in pleasure is *dead* while she *liveth;*' 'You that were *dead* hath He *quickened*,' or made alive. In this sense, death is separation from God and from communion with Him, but not non-existence. This may be termed *spiritual* death.

(3.) It is used also to express the state of everlasting punishment, to which the impenitent are condemned after the last solemn judgment. Then it is called '*the second death.*' To prove that death does not mean a ceasing to exist, we have only to ask, Did Adam cease to exist the day he sinned and died? No; but as soon as he sinned he became subject to *natural* death, and he died in a *spiritual* sense. Sin separated him from

God. Thus it is obvious that created or *natural* life is one thing, and *spiritual* life is another. It is plain also that the word *death* when applied to the soul does not mean annihilation or ceasing to exist, but means separation from God. Natural death and spiritual death are two things totally distinct and different. In supporting the theory that the soul of man dies, or ceases to exist, many Scriptures are misapplied by being used in a sense in which the writers did not intend to use them; *e.g.*, 'Like the beasts that perish,' is one of the passages so quoted. But this expression plainly means no more than that those who indulge their lusts, who live only for this life, and take no thought for the future, are like the beasts, which are devoid of reason. And yet this passage is solemnly quoted among others to prove the doctrine of the annihilation of the human soul.

It is argued in support of the annihilation theory, that in Scripture it is frequently said of the wicked, that they shall be '*destroyed*,' shall be punished with everlasting '*destruction*,' shall '*perish*;' and that these expressions mean and prove that they shall be annihilated.

This argument has a semblance of weight

and authority, but on a little examination that semblance vanishes away. The words '*destroy*' and '*destruction*,' as we have seen with the words 'death' and 'to die,' do not lend the slightest weight to the doctrine of annihilation, for they do not mean in any case *ceasing to exist*. They express a change of state, attended with loss or damage, moral or physical, a condition of ruin, contrasted with a previous state of being.

The verb '*destroy*' is used at times in conversation as it is used in Scripture. We say of a man who has lost his property or his character, he is '*ruined*,' he is '*destroyed*.' Thus, in the Old Testament, 'The king of Babylon shall *destroy* this land;' 'The land was *destroyed* by flies;' 'O Israel, thou hast *destroyed* thyself.' Job says, 'The Lord hath *destroyed* me on every side.' Were Egypt and Israel and Job himself all utterly *annihilated?* But let us see what is the result of this application of the word in the New Testament. Our Saviour, according to these expositors, says, 'I am not sent but to the *annihilated* * sheep of the house of Israel.' 'If our gospel is hid, *it is hid to them* that are

* It is the same word in the original, which is variously rendered in English, '*lose*' or '*lost*,' '*perish*' or '*destroy*.' See the tract on *Annihilation and Universalism*.

annihilated.' '*Annihilate* not him with thy meat for whom Christ died.' 'Through thy knowledge shall thy weak brother be *annihilated.*' Thus, according to this system of interpretation, the eating of meat by one brother *annihilates* another.

'The world that then was, *perished.*' Was it *annihilated?* How then is it that it is still under our feet? 'Lord, save us, we perish.' Were the disciples afraid of being *annihilated?* 'He that saveth his life shall *annihilate* it, and he that *annihilateth* his life for My sake shall find it.' The folly of such a method of interpretation is its refutation.

Many of the advocates of the doctrine of annihilation take their stand upon the text, 'He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son *hath not life.*' They assert accordingly that there is life, that is, 'eternal life,' only in Christ. This is true, but they confound eternal *life* and eternal existence, two things which are entirely distinct, and which have no necessary connection.

'*Eternal life*' is a term used in Scripture to express a *superadded* gift, granted to a being previously endowed with an undying soul. It is the impartation of that which is divine, in union with Christ risen.

Christ is essentially 'the eternal life.' He

is the life of the believer. Thus it is written, 'When Christ, *who is our life*,' etc. 'Life,' therefore, implies all the blessings of salvation, which we have in Christ. He that hath the Son, hath eternal life and blessedness in Him.

Eternal life is not, *in this sense*, the privilege of angels, however high their station. It is the gift of God's grace to fallen children of Adam, who are accepted *in Christ*. 'God has given us eternal life, and this life *is in His Son*.' So, men who have not Christ and die in their sins have not *eternal life*, but they do not on that account cease to have *eternal existence*. Only the believer has *eternal life*, which may be regarded as another name for blessedness *in Christ*.

Another passage which is quoted in support of the doctrine of annihilation is, 'God only hath immortality.' The obvious meaning of this passage is, that God alone possesses immortality *in Himself independently*. With us it is derived and dependent; with Him it is essential and underived. If we are to take this passage *absolutely* and without qualification, then no saint has immortality. Christians as well as unbelievers die like brute beasts, and angels must share the same fate. It is objected, If man was possessed of immortality, why should he be encouraged to seek for it, as in Romans ii. 7?

Now, the Greek word thus rendered in this passage occurs eight times in the New Testament. Twice it is rendered 'sincerity,' and has no reference to body or soul. In the other six passages it refers, not to the soul, but, as Parkhurst remarks, *to the body*. It has nothing therefore to do with the undying nature of the soul, but with *the incorruptibility of the glorified body*. In 1 Corinthians xv., this word is used four times, and is uniformly translated '*incorruption*.' In the other two passages, where it is loosely translated immortality, it has the same meaning. Most annihilationists who maintain that there is life *only in Christ*, maintain also, that there is a future punishment of the wicked. They hold that at the resurrection the soul and the body will be re-united, and that 'ages after ages' both will be utterly consumed and annihilated in hell. By those holding this view we are told that it is by the '*second death*, that the sinner ceases to exist. 'Annihilation,' says Mr. Randles, 'must be hard beset when it seeks support in the apocalyptic phrase, "second death."' It occurs four times, and is said to have been a common Jewish phrase for the future punishment of the wicked. Christ says, 'He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.'

But annihilation would not hurt miserable offenders. They must, therefore, remain in being to endure the punishment threatened.

There is nothing in the expression 'second death' to imply, or even suggest annihilation. As the 'first or natural death does not terminate either the material or the immaterial part of man, neither does the second or deeper death.' In the words of Dr. Adam Clarke, 'The *first death* consisted in the separation of the soul from the body for a season; the second death in the separation of body and soul for ever. The first death is that from which there may be a resurrection; the second death is that from which there can be no recovery. By the first, the *body* is *destroyed* during *time;* by the second, *body* and *soul* are destroyed through *eternity*.' 'Thus the sentence of the second death not only withholds all countenance from the theory of annihilation, but it is in several points directly opposed to it.' If the terms *dead* and *death* are to be understood in a literal sense when applied to the soul, we must read the passage, 'Passed from death unto life,' passed from *annihilation* unto life; again, 'Arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light,' arise from *annihilation*, and Christ shall give thee light. The folly of this kind of inter-

pretation is seen in the case of other words, such as, *destruction*, *perdition*, etc.; *e.g.*, 'But they that will be rich fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in *destruction* and *perdition*.' Surely this cannot mean that men are drowned in *annihilation?* It simply refers to the overwhelming punishment which overtakes the sinner, *viz.*, the 'eternal judgment' spoken of in Hebrews vi. 2.

'But,' says one writer on this subject, 'it will not be a simple act of annihilation, but a process of destruction. The fire of God's wrath will not consume them at once, but they will be tormented in it day and night for the ages of ages they have yet to live. What will be the nature of the torment, and what the length of the ages, we are not informed. It will produce no change in their character. After the final judgment, the wicked will continue wicked, and must therefore perish.'*

This theory, taken as a whole, represents the judgment of the wicked not to be an ever-continuing punishment, but one enduring for ages on ages, and then terminating in the destruction of consciousness, or, in other words, in the annihilation of being. But it is much more difficult to conceive that the

* See *God's Purpose in Judgment.*

wicked could ever be raised from the first death to be punished for ages of ages and then annihilated, than to adopt the orthodox view that, once raised, the continuance of being is endless. If annihilation of being were in God's plan, it would be expected on the first death; a resurrection seems wholly to shut out any such supposition. It is clearly incumbent on any one who advances a new theory contrary to the general belief of Christian men to give full Scripture authority for his assertion. This the writer referred to affects to do, but with very small success. He first refers to the passage of God being 'able to destroy both body and soul in hell,' forgetting the statement, that in hell, or in other words, the lake of fire and brimstone, they 'shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.' 'No wonder,' says Mr. Randles, 'that the attempt to extort Destructionism from this passage should be followed by the confession' (by one of the strongest advocates of the theory of annihilation) 'that there is undoubtedly a difficulty in connection with the words, "shall be tormented for ever and ever." If the punishment be thus eternal, the word "destroy" cannot mean annihilation of being, because then the punishment would cease, but must be read as a judgment which

swallows up both body and soul by an eternal punishment, which is an endless destruction. He also quotes the passage: "He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire;" and observes upon it: "Could any figure be employed more utterly repugnant to the idea of perpetual continuance? We really can do nothing but ask any one who still feels a doubt to try the experiment of throwing some chaff into an intensely hot fire, and see what becomes of it." The writer forgets the figure used in the text is the "wheat" for the righteous to be "gathered into His garner" of glory, and the "chaff" for the wicked to be unceasingly judged. The wheat recognised as the saved soul, and the chaff as the lost soul, brings before us in the chaff never-ending beings punished in unquenchable fire in the lake of fire. To argue that unquenchable fire means a fierce burning fire which shall at once devour and annihilate the beings under judgment is really to overturn the whole, and pervert a passage which expresses a never-ceasing punishment into one instantly terminated.'

Another writer* adopts the puerile sup-

* Silas Henn. His pamphlet contains such an amount of self-assurance and rhapsody, as to render it unworthy of perusal. Mr. Henn invents the *grossest* caricatures of the

position that the sentence, the 'smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever,' may 'mean that the smoke of the fire which gives them torment shall ascend for a long while, as a monument of the divine vengeance which fell upon them; and the fire may burn, and the smoke may ascend, long after the guilty rebels themselves are burnt up and destroyed.' The passage, we believe, refers manifestly to the manner of destruction—a perfect paralysis staying all action, a continuous punishment destroying all comfort, all hope, to be endlessly endured. But there is nothing in the use of the term to warrant annihilation of being. The former writer alludes to the passage, 'There remaineth a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries,' and dwells upon the word 'devour,' which he alleges, when coupled with the words 'fiery indignation,' must mean utter destruction. But surely this must be interpreted with reference to the explanation in Revelations, to which we have before referred; and there is nothing in the word 'devour' which is not fully answered by the being swallowed up in the lake of fire.

orthodox doctrine, and then proceeds in the wildest manner to demolish the man of straw which his own imagination has set up.

Another quotation in support of the theory of annihilation is, 'These as natural brute-beasts shall utterly perish in their own corruption;' and it is argued that the force of the passage lies in the sinner utterly perishing like a brute-beast. A careful consideration of the passage will show it to be a declaration that, as the brute-beast goes unconsciously to its death, so the sinner, prompted and blinded by sinful corruption, goes heedlessly to utter and eternal punishment.

In order to counteract the meaning of other passages of Scripture respecting the eternity of punishment, the following singular argument is used:

'When the word "eternal" or "everlasting" is applied in Scripture to the existence of God, or to the future glory of the Church, we understand it as meaning absolutely endless, *because* we know, from other statements, that neither the one nor the other will ever come to an end. When they are applied to the future punishment of the wicked, we know that at least, as far as *felt* punishment, they cannot mean absolutely endless, because Scripture positively declares that evil will come to an end, and the irreclaimably wicked be utterly destroyed.' This mode of argument, if admissible, would prove anything.

'Everlasting,' he says, 'applied to the saved, means without end, *because we know from other statements* that it will never come to an end; but applied to the lost, it cannot mean absolutely endless, *because Scripture positively declares that evil will come to an end, and the irreclaimably wicked be utterly destroyed.*' The question is not, what this writer thinks he knows, or thinks other Scripture declares, but what is really the meaning of the Scripture he quotes.

Upon these mistaken interpretations the theory of annihilation is grounded. The writer's attempted direct proofs do not support him; and his escape from the reiterated passages which declare the eternity of punishment rests simply upon an assertion that they cannot mean what the words imply, because they would contradict other Scriptures which he does not quote; or if he refers to those we have first examined, we certainly believe they do not warrant his deductions.

'The Scripture proofs,' says Mr. Randles, 'adduced in favour of the doctrine of annihilation consist in passages twisted from their proper design and from their natural harmony with the analogy of faith—a process by which Scripture may be made to teach anything. It is triumphantly affirmed that *hundreds* of pas-

sages are contained in the Bible in favour of the notion under review. Hundreds—yes, *thousands!*—if they may be, like most of those already considered, disjointed, distorted, and accommodated to suit the purpose of the advocate; and the same claim might be made by the most unscriptural doctrine that ever sought shelter under Biblical phraseology.'

CHAPTER X.

THE DOCTRINE OF UNIVERSALISM.

At the antipodes of *annihilation* stands *universalism*. The advocates of these opposite theories set themselves 'in battle array' to defend their own peculiar views. In the strongest terms the two systems, each by the other, is denounced a delusion; *e.g.*, 'The miserable doctrine of annihilation;' 'The rampant delusion of universalism;' 'Mischievous heresy of annihilation;' 'Heretical universalism;' 'Mischievous delusion of the salvation of all men;' 'As arbitrary, as unreasonable, and as extravagant an assumption as could enter into the mind of men.' (This last sentence alludes to the doctrine of immortal *existence* for all, which is included in the theory of the universalist.) Such are the verdicts pronounced by the leaders of these two schools of theological thought.

Both systems spring from the same root. They are the inventions of unstable minds, speculating where they ought to believe and

worship. But although utterly irreconcilable with each other, they both harmonize towards one melancholy end—the fostering of a love of sin, by alike promising a final deliverance (near or remote) from its just retribution; and any argument which proves the eternity of future punishment disproves the doctrine of universalism.

In Colossians i. 20 the purpose of God is spoken of as being 'to reconcile all things unto Himself.' This text is generally quoted in support of universalism. But this is evidently a short-sighted application of this text. The word *all* is frequently used relatively in Scripture, as comprising all those things or persons referred to. When it is said '*all*' Jerusalem went out, it does not mean every individual inhabitant of the city. When we read '*all*' men glorified God, the word is evidently to be understood with limitation. It is to be taken in a qualified sense. The connection in which a word is used will always define its import. Now when 'all things,' as in Philippians ii. 10, are spoken of as being brought *into subjection to the Lordship of Christ*, they are divided into three classes: 'things *in heaven*, and things *in earth*, and things *under the earth*;' and there is not a word about salvation; it is simply the Lordship of Christ

that is spoken of. All shall acknowledge Christ as Lord, those who have rejected Him as well as those who have accepted Him. But it should be observed, when *reconciliation* is spoken of, in Colossians i. 20, it is only those *in heaven* and *in earth* that are named; there is no mention of those under the earth, or in hell.

This application of the words 'all things' is disproved also by the fact that it is at the very period when all things are made new, and reconciled to God, that the punishment of the devil and his angels, and of the wicked and unsaved, in the lake of fire *begins*. The wicked are thus put outside the circle of which God shall be the centre, and of which He shall be 'all in all.' *They* are not included in the 'all things reconciled to God.' Another passage is a favourite quotation which is supposed to be conclusive. 'Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began' (Acts iii. 21). 'There is, however,' says Mr. Randles, 'nothing in the phrase "restitution of all things," beyond its superficial aspect in favour of the universalist. The utterance of the words, apart from the connection, may sound at first like an echo of

his favourite theory, but on inspection, the *sense* is against him. The subject of Peter's discourse is the prosperity of the Messiah's work in *this world.* The times of restitution were those of which God had spoken by the prophets. In the following verse Peter gives a specimen of the predictions referred to; whence it appears that the times of restitution were such as belonged to men in their temporal probation.' There is no reference whatever to the other world.

This interpretation is further confirmed by Peter's allusion to the restitution as a fulfilment of the promise that in the seed of Abraham 'shall all the kindreds of the *earth* be blessed.' This was a blessing to be realised in *this world*, for it is declared repeatedly to be for the kindreds '*of the earth.*' It is plain therefore that 'the times of restitution of all things' refers only to the salvation of the multitudes who obey the gospel ere the Son of man shall come in His glory. Nor can universalism find any support in God's new Jerusalem declaration, 'Behold, I make all things new;' for immediately after He consigns several classes of offenders to 'the lake of fire,' 'which is the second death.' On any fair interpretation, these (with other passages of Scripture) refuse to yield any sanction to the

theory under consideration. No amount of straining can logically extort a conclusion involving the salvation of men who shall be condemned to 'everlasting destruction.' Two arguments might be used to show the fallacy of the theory of universalism. First, the *moral:* from the nature of the ungodly themselves; secondly, the *judicial:* resulting from the irreversibleness of the sentence of God upon sin.

First, the *moral* argument. It is supposed that the fires of retribution will *purify* as well as *punish*, that the figures employed are intended to illustrate a *refining* chastisement, that a 'second probation will be allowed the ungodly in the other world, resulting in a happy and glorious immortality.'

In these sentiments there lurks the idea that in suffering there is a remedial element. We are unable to find in Scripture any warrant for such a thought. *Retribution is not regenerative.* How then can the sinner cheat God and find a way into heaven?

It is suggested by the language we have quoted that a second probation might meet the case. This is an impossibility, 'but even assuming the possibility, where would be the equity? Give men to know that there would be a second probation, and how many of them

would care for the first? And if they neglect the first, they are so much weaker in moral nerve to encounter the discipline of the second. And if there be two probations, why not three?

'How do men regard this probationary idea as it comes up in the concerns of daily life? There is one seed-time in the year; an indolent farmer neglects it, and then sets up the theory that to have only an annual seed-time is ridiculous!

'When poverty comes as "an armed man," does society pity or reproach him? It may be suggested that possibly the suffering might have a good effect upon the lost, it might cause them to reflect, it might bring them to repentance. It is forgotten, however, that everything has been done for them which even God could do; they have resisted the whole system of redeeming love, thrust away the bleeding and dying Christ; and, if mere suffering will save any man, God has made a stupendous mistake in sending His Son to save sinners. Hell would then be more successful than the Son of God. If temporary punishment in hell will bring men to God, why send Jesus Christ to die a sacrificial death, or any death at all? Why not put all men into hell at once, and save by fear those who refuse to be saved by love?

'We are bound to point out that nowhere in the sacred writings is hell referred to as exerting a remedial influence on the criminal; if it does exert such an influence, it was an inexcusable oversight not to dwell upon the fact specifically. On the other hand, it is distinctly taught by Jesus Christ, that if men will not avail themselves of such moral advantages as are at their disposal, they would not be persuaded *though one rose from the dead.*'* Scripture, as far as we understand it, does not hold out the slightest hope that the ungodly will, after death, undergo any moral change, any remedial process. The Word has gone forth: 'He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still;' 'He shall *never* see life, the wrath of God *abideth* on him.'

The present time, and the present time only, is *the day of grace*,—grace that can meet the need of the greatest sinner and fit him for the presence of God. But this day once passed, man's state is eternally fixed; the bad never becomes the good, nor the good; the bad: 'between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot, neither can they pass to us that *would come* from thence.' Is

* Dr. Parker.

objection taken to this illustration because of the parabolic form of the narrative! We must remind the objector that a parable is not a *fable*. A parable is always true to nature, and the circumstances delineated such as in the nature of things may have happened; and these words from Christ's guileless lips do clearly guarantee to us the destiny of the good and the bad in the eternal world. The 'notion that hell will be a nursery of holiness, under the tuition of the devil and his angels, is a supposition (which appears to us) too absurd to be seriously entertained or refuted.'

The sceptical bias of the age has, however, not only acted upon unregenerate natures but has made its way into many Christian minds, and caused a deflection in the current of thought from the right line of simply ascertaining what the Scriptures reveal, into the devious path of first doubting whether that which God says He will do is right, as it is plainly written, and then inventing some strange theory to supersede plain Scripture by an unwarranted addition. Thus Christian men have not hesitated to propose a supplement to God's revealed purpose of judgment, asserting that the 'statements of Scripture on the eternal contrast between the righteous

and the wicked are not the whole truth,' that a mitigation of that contrast is a reserve in the Divine Mind 'nowhere in the Bible in set terms explicitly revealed;' then follows the theory that 'there is a mighty and sufficient cause for this silence.' It is this: 'The solemn contrast of reward and punishment can thus work its full effect unmingled, unmitigated on the hearts of men;' 'the sternness of the divine threatenings, and the refusal to weaken their horrors by revealing distinctly the contrasted truth.' * It is very strange that this writer should not have inferred that what was a weighty and sufficient cause for God's silence on the supposed 'contrasted truth' of mercy to the lost must equally seal up the lips of man. He does indeed declare that those who have found in his supposed 'contrasted truth' 'relief for their own perplexity should beware of a rash and hasty publication of their thoughts, lest they should run counter to the wisdom and love by *which alone that silence can be explained;*' and it is an obvious conclusion, that if the imaginary further revelation would, if heretofore revealed, have weakened the moral force of the 'solemn contrast of reward and punishment,' it will work this demoralization

* See *God's Purpose in Judgment.*

wherever it is made known. It is deeply painful, however sadly interesting, to track the workings of a mind once fully launched into speculation. This writer thinks he can discern 'a moral sign when a further disclosure of God's purposes in coming judgment becomes seasonable and may be lawfully made known.' That is, he now feels himself authorized to speak out upon the supposed truth on which God in His 'wisdom and love' has kept silence. The moral sign to which the writer refers is thus stated: 'When the sense of God's universal goodness, derived from His own Word, has been more widely diffused, and has a firmer hold on the general conscience than the authority of His Word itself, then the silence which once deepened the power of His warnings will abate their force.' We cannot read this passage without a shudder, if we are to read it as intended to mark unreprovingly the tendency of Christian minds. Is it possible to conceive in any Christian that 'a sense of God's universal goodness, derived from His Word,' shall lift itself up above the authority of His Word itself; that man's inference from God's Word shall be made superior to the Word? Yet this is asserted, if 'by the general conscience' is intended the conscience of Christians.

If the passage be intended only to describe the degree of deflection from Scriptural truth which the world welcomes, then it is not a new thing, but the normal state of the worldly mind, which hopes for mercy and salvation, without inquiry whether there is in its own case any warrant in the Word of God for such a hope, and 'the moral sign' to which the writer refers would be wanting. In this view he might simply condemn it, and warn those who hold it that they have allowed their thoughts to drift into the infidel conclusion that our own notions of 'God's universal goodness' authorize us to deny the authority of His Word so far as that Word sets forth His judgment of everlasting punishment against the wicked. If our minds once wander into the presumption that we may set aside the plain declarations of Scripture whenever they contradict our own notions of what God ought to do, we in fact constitute ourselves judges of God instead of humble learners at His footstool. But beyond the spiritual danger arising (to the soul) from such a train of thought, there is the presumption that he, the writer, discerns in the signs of the times a clear indication that *he* should now proclaim (after having solemnly warned others against a too hasty publication

of their thoughts) that upon which God has for all ages past been 'in wisdom and love silent.'

The sign upon which he rests this conclusion is, that what he calls 'the general conscience' is so impressed with a 'sense of God's universal goodness' 'as to deny the authority' of His Word when it reveals the purpose of eternal punishment. What is this but saying that when the heresy of the non-eternity of punishment has become in some degree popular, it is time for God's ministers to publish a theory by which it can be supported and can be shown to have been in the mind of God from the beginning? The real and solemn question is, 'What does the Word of God reveal concerning the ultimate state of the wicked? If men were content to stake the issue of this controversy on the plain declarations of Scripture, there is little room to doubt the result; for while some struggle under the doctrine in question, and are unable to comprehend it (and there are many other doctrines beyond human comprehension), the teachings of Christ ought to have our sincere and unhesitating belief. Our conviction is, that the word *eternal* means without end, and the opposite interpretation a species of German Rationalism.

Secondly, the *judicial* argument. And here we have room for only a few words, as this point is anticipated in previous remarks. What can be more decisive than the verdict, '*He shall not see life*,' '*hath never forgiveness*'? Such is God's sentence upon the finally impenitent; a sentence with which the doctrine of universalism is utterly irreconcilable.

We read of those 'whose names are in the book of life,' and of those whose names are not in that book. The two parties, the righteous and the wicked, are dealt with accordingly. But if this theory were true, instead of some being saved and others lost, the names of all must be in the book of life, and all will be saved; the only difference being that some enter into life later than others.

If this doctrine be true, 2 Thessalonians i. 9 is untrue, for it is there declared that some 'shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord.' If this doctrine be true, it is not true to tell sinners that if they die in their sins, whither Christ is gone 'they cannot come.' If this doctrine be true, then the words of the Lord Jesus, 'Ye must be born again,' are not true. If believers and unbelievers shall be all saved, then the Word of the Lord must be corrected,

and we must henceforth read, 'He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall alike be saved, but only a little later.'

If this doctrine be true, when it is said, 'their end is destruction,' it means, their end will be blessedness and glory.

If true, and if the worm die, the conscience, instead of accusing, will cease to convict.

If this doctrine be true, then the haters of Christ and the lovers of Christ, the most holy and the most unholy, shall ultimately spend an eternity of bliss together.

If this doctrine be true, then hell itself is a sure though a rough and circuitous road to heaven.

If this doctrine be true, then we may commence proclaiming a gospel for those who die in their sins when they have suffered 'ages after ages.'

CHAPTER XI.

MISCELLANEOUS OBJECTIONS.

The apostles of annihilation and universalism* raise the inference, when even they do not plainly assert, that there *ought* to be deliverance; in other words, that the guilt is not such as to *deserve* everlasting punishment. Standing on this ground, they underrate the guilt that they may lighten the punishment. In so doing they raise two sceptical doubts, unsettling the faith of those who entertain them.

1. Is God just to inflict such punishment?

2. Are the Scriptures true when they declare it. This cannot be, it is said, because it would involve a belief in the eternity of evil. This is a spectre against which these schools of thought are ever declaiming. Nothing can be more erroneous than the view they take of the nature of eternal punishment. They evidently treat it as if it were a continuance of evil; saying of it that it is an 'eternal exhibition of Satan's works in their

* See *God's Purpose in Judgment.*

fullest possible maturity.' But what says the Scripture concerning it? 'Fire came down from heaven and devoured them; and the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.' Thus, overwhelmed by judgment, cast into prison, and shut up into eternal punishment, is the Scripture explanation; and yet it is called an 'eternal exhibition of Satan's works in their fullest possible maturity.' They write under the impression that Satan has prevailed, whereas Satan is judged and condemned. The view of the eternity of evil against which they declaim is an utter perversion of God's purpose of crushing all evil by *an eternal judgment*, so that it can no more work or tempt or defile God's righteous judgment; puts an end to evil, not by annihilation of being, but by an overwhelming judgment.

There is no such thing as the eternity of evil, excepting so far as sin and evil, cast out and condemned, lie paralyzed under God's displeasure. But it is said, 'Most assuredly, if Satan is to be the author of eternal sin, and, consequently of eternal suffering, he will have an eternal triumph, and God will have an eternal defeat.' This language is almost too flippant for quotation. So far from Satan

having an eternal triumph, he will be overwhelmed by an eternal condemnation.

Surely these writers must recognise in the eternity of Satan's punishment a righteous record, not that Satan triumphs, but that he and his works are overthrown.

Mr. Randles says, 'If the endless continuance of moral or natural evil be a defeat of the Son of God, so was the *commencement* of evil, and so is the *existence* of evil through the course of time. But in reality neither is so. Is the majesty of law defeated when it binds and punishes a notorious criminal, because it does not make him cordially loyal? Is the national Government defeated when it brings a murderous traitor to the scaffold or life-long imprisonment?

'The spirit of objection must have run mad when it descends to the puerility of calling the penal subjugation of wicked men and fiends a defeat of the authority by which it is achieved.'

One writer against the doctrine has alleged that to 'adjudge a sinner to eternal punishment can only be an act of Satan,' and shows the blindness of his own moral perceptions by adding: 'I see no greater difficulty in the creation of beings who would have to suffer for no fault of their own than in the creation

of beings who would have to suffer by or for their own fault.' Moral freedom and human responsibility are thus lost sight of, and the distinction between right and wrong is utterly cast aside.

It is forgotten that the guilt of the sinner is, not only that he is impenitent, but that he so loves his sin as to reject the Saviour and refuse pardon and salvation. What is the punishment due to guilt like this? God alone can answer the question.

Several other objections are raised against the doctrine of eternal punishment, some of which we briefly notice:—

(1.) It is urged that the doctrine cannot be true, 'because it would mar the bliss of the redeemed in heaven.'

'Could the saved be happy and passive in heaven when the muffled shrieks of their brethren, faint from the distance, fell on their ears? Could the angels be contented when they contemplated the far-off lurid orb, and knew the agonies that fed its conscious conflagration? Must not this knowledge destroy the happiness of the saved and fill all heaven with sympathetic woe.

'Eternal suffering on the part of the lost and uninterrupted blessedness on the part of the saved cannot, we think, be reconciled.

Would not the horrible thought of the existence of such a tremendous amount of evil, and of such an eternal weight of suffering, disturb the quiet and damp the joy of the glorified saints? Could perfect bliss amongst one part of the human family exist with the knowledge of perfect, consummate, and eternal misery amongst the other part, and that part consisting of a great proportion of the entire race of Adam. It would break the stoutest heart, drive the strongest mind raving mad.

'It is a monstrous bug-bear, frightening us out of our senses; a hideous dream, for which the devil and not the Bible is responsible. Our very instincts and moral perceptions are shocked at this doctrine.' The answer to all this caricature, sophistry, and sentimentality is, that our instincts and moral perceptions are not the tribunal before which God's moral government ought to be arraigned. The instincts and moral perceptions must be sadly perverted, and the judgment wofully benighted, when such a presumptuous issue is raised. Whenever these writers can explain to us how the redeemed in heaven can be happy while the wicked are being punished 'ages on ages or ages after ages,' we will undertake to reconcile the doctrine of eternal punishment with

the uninterrupted blessedness of heaven. If the assumption in the language quoted be true, then ever since the angels who 'kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation,' were driven down to hell, the songs of their unfallen brethren have been hushed into silence, and we must read with considerable suspicion the glowing descriptions of inspired men respecting the joys of the heavenly world.

(2.) This doctrine cannot be true, because 'a perfect love (God is love) seems to imply a sincere desire for the happiness of every conscious and intelligent creature, and a perfect victory of Almighty love that this desire should not fail through the strength of evil, but be at length fulfilled.' In this inference, again, the distinction between good and evil is entirely forgotten. 'God is angry with the wicked every day;' 'Neither shall evil dwell with Thee.' So that it is of necessity that all who are come to God to abide with Him for ever must be righteous. There is no single passage in the whole range of Scripture which intimates God's allowance of sin, or His mercy towards the impenitent sinner. Nowhere does God's Word assert a 'perfect love' on the part of God towards individuals, irrespective of their forsaking sin. There cannot be any true happiness in the

'conscious and intelligent creature' unless it be conjoined with holiness. 'The perfect victory of Almighty love,' which is set forth in the work of Christ is not a victory of salvation only but equally a victory of judgment. God is equally the God of holiness as the God of love, and in the outgoing of His love He turneth away from wickedness as an offence.

(3.) It cannot be true, because 'it would be a violation of the principle which characterizes God's moral government of His creatures on earth,' 'all life's discipline being ameliorative in its purpose and end.'

It is here forgotten that God's government of finally impenitent sinners is not *disciplinary* but *retributive*. 'One is the direct contrast of the other.' 'He that is unjust, let him be unjust still.'

Other objections are urged against the doctrine of eternal punishment, but they consist of quibbles rather than of arguments to be seriously considered or refuted. 'Alas, that any Christians should be ensnared by this beguiling error dressed up in the garb of Scripture authority! But how much more sad that any of our pulpits should be occupied by misguided theorists, who are opening the floodgates of ungodliness on our world, by pro-

claiming a gospel for those who die in their sins, glad tidings of great joy for the wicked and finally impenitent! 'The danger of modern infidelity lies in its subtlety. It professes to honour the Scriptures and to receive the truth, whilst, as we have seen, its tendency is to undermine its foundations. More honourable would it be, were those who set aside the plainest statements of the Word of God, to throw revelation honestly overboard, and take their stand upon their own conclusions as to what appears to them right and fitting.

Reject the Scriptures you *may;* but twist them to teach either annihilation or universalism you *cannot.* The whole controversy, then, resolves itself into one simple question. Is the Bible the Word of God, or is it a 'cunningly devised fable'?

Every man is under the solemn responsibility of deciding for himself whether he will receive in all simplicity '*the true sayings of God,*' or allow himself to be carried away by the 'utterly conflicting opinions of *men.*'

CONCLUDING REMARKS.

In bringing this subject to a close, we are bound to confess that some of our quotations, even from writers on the orthodox side of the question, are a little too dogmatic in *tone;* there are statements which would seem to indicate a desire to foreclose this question, but with such sentiments we do not agree.

Nothing would be gained by stifling controversy. Nor do we wish to be understood that there are not different standpoints from which this subject can be conscientiously and honestly viewed. Difficulties exist in many Christian minds respecting the *fact* of eternal punishment; but those difficulties are not so great as the reason *why* God should have at all originated such a plan as is developed in the history of His moral government; and a loyal adherence to truth does not prevent any man from a thoughtful and earnest investigation of the difficulties which surround certain doctrines of revelation. Many Christian men stand in relation to this question in a state of

exegetical equilibrium; this is a rational and hopeful state of mind. In other cases, we fear, it is the human will setting itself up against the declared will of God. With many others this subject is deemed of little importance, a disposition is shown, even among earnest Christian men, to treat it as a matter of mere opinion and unnecessary speculation. We are met with the statement that 'this doctrine is not fundamental;' which statement may be true in one sense, but it is untrue in other senses. This doctrine may not be essential to salvation, but we believe it to be essential to the harmony of Scriptural truth. 'We grant,' says Mr. Randles, 'that its belief is not made a necessary condition of salvation; and the same might be said of many other weighty doctrines such as man's universal depravity, the universality of redemption, and the direct witness of the Spirit.' But where would such a principle, once admitted, land us? In the regions of theological chaos. It is one of the most painful and dangerous phases of popular religious thought in these times, that doctrinal standards are treated with open dislike. 'It would be unreasonable to expect this modern ferment against Christian doctrines in general to let the particular one of eternal punishment

pass unmolested.' Never was there a period when we needed to hold dogmatic truth with a firmer grasp than to-day. It is not the dogmatic *principle* which is to be objected to, so much as the imperious dogmatic *spirit* by which Scriptural truth is sometimes enforced.

No good can be done by urging a belief in this doctrine without decided *conviction*. Whenever men are sincere seekers after truth, we must permit them (as far as controversy is concerned) to treat this matter as an *open question*. Coercion will never convince the judgment, and God will hold every man responsible for the conclusions at which he arrives as well as for the manner—careless, or otherwise—by which he arrives at them.

In the report of the Conference at the Cannon Street Hotel we see with what haste some of the gentlemen present have arrived at their conclusions, and how slender is the foundation upon which they are building their theory of destructionism. We see too, with what zeal they would urge the brotherhood of Christian ministers to take up this question. The position of those who cling to the orthodox view is spoken of as the *ne plus ultra* of self-exaltation; other not very complimentary terms are applied to them, such as, 'serious, but narrow-minded persons,' etc.

Such language indicates an impatience which vitiates all their reasoning. We give two or three statements from these addresses as examples of the same spirit:

(1.) 'We earnestly appeal to all who know the truth, especially ministers, teachers, and preachers, openly to avow their faith, *i.e.*, the doctrine of annihilation. This is one of the blazing questions of the day, and we may fairly ask all our brethren to consider whether, under existing circumstances, it is not every one's duty before God and man openly to declare himself in this great cause." It is here assumed that the doctrine of annihilation is the *truth*, and the opposite belief an egregious *error*. We deny both the premises and the conclusion.

(2.) 'As for the numerous persons in eminent positions who, being convinced of the truth of the doctrine of conditional immortality, with all its consequences, yet concealed their belief out of regard to their "usefulness," there is very little to be said that is honourable to them. What can such men understand by usefulness or by loyalty to God? We will leave such persons to the meditation of their own consciences and to the style of *usefulness which they prefer*.'

Our reply to this language is, that the

conduct of many respecting this solemn question is open to serious objection, both on account of their *usefulness* and their *loyalty*.

It appears, that to convince ungodly men that the retribution which will fall upon the finally impenitent is not so heavy as the orthodox Church assumes is more worthy of their attention than to win souls for Christ.

Since this *hobby* (we quote their own *term*) took possession of them, their 'usefulness' seems to have become *nil*. As to the *loyalty* referred to: we opine that there is far more of that quality of mind displayed on the part of those who hesitate to preach those dogmas than on the part of those who enunciate them. There are brethren whose morbid sensibility prompts them to blaze abroad their doubts, while at the same time they are utterly unable to define their mental position in regard to the doctrine in question. We heard of a brother a short time ago who preached a sermon on this subject, by which the minds of many were perplexed, but when pushed by argument in *private*, he was obliged to confess that the teachings of Scripture pointed with almost *irresistible* force in the direction of eternal punishment. Where is the loyalty of such conduct? A little notoriety must have been the

strongest element in this pitiable exhibition of human folly.

(3.) 'There are many serious but narrow-minded persons who still cling to the skirts of traditional theology, and imagine, though they have not fully investigated the question, that it is contrary to the Bible. Now this is not certainly the position of a single educated teacher that I have ever met with. My duties for many years have brought me into contact with religious teachers of all denominations, and therefore I venture to say with some degree of confidence, I know the opinions of public preachers of religion throughout the country, and I challenge contradiction to this statement, that you will not meet an educated minister of truth who holds the old-fashioned views in a traditional way.' Can all this be true? No; the language is so insinuating and extravagant that it refutes itself. We are obliged to conjecture one of two things: either that the writer's knowledge of educated religious teachers is not so extensive as is supposed, or that he must have been seduced by the spirit of delusion.

Is not the last sentence intended to convey the impression that educated religious teachers are giving up the *fact* of eternal punishment while they have only renounced its *traditional* surroundings?

The combined sentiment of religious teachers is not so far in sympathy with the doctrine of annihilation as the language quoted would seem to indicate. The *fact* of eternal punishment is a deep mystery, which cannot be sounded by any ethical plummet devised by a finite intellect. But there it stands on the pages of divine truth in language so clear and positive that we feel bound to believe it. This we believe is the position of the majority of the religious teachers to whom reference is made. On a leaflet appended to these addresses it is stated that 'the personal experience related in the preface is regarded as eminently calculated to procure a candid consideration of the views herein propounded.' In our judgment the preface is the weakest part of the pamphlet. The writer admits that 'he was brought up in the most rigid Calvinistic teaching, that he was taught to believe that God's dealings with mankind proceeded upon the ground of predestination, and that for His own glory He had chosen from eternity a small selection of mankind to be heirs of heaven, and had destined the vast majority also for His own glory to the eternal torment of hell fire, that God was apparently so merciless as to condemn to inconceivable

agony the vast majority of His creatures, without giving the greater part of them the *faintest chance of escape.*'

No wonder that a man taught to believe such monstrous perversions of the divine government should hail, as with 'a flash of light,' the doctrine of conditional immortality, and, consequently, the theory of annihilation. Such a man's conversion to *destructionism* will not have, we venture to assert, with the general Christian public even the weight of a *feather.*

We admit that there is a large and growing class, whose minds are unduly influenced by sentiment, who are drifting away from the doctrine of eternal punishment. But this principle if carried out would 'veto all *justice* where it clashed with indulgence, and allow the universe to go to wreck under the pretext of love. 'There is an amiable class of believers in endless punishment, who frequently intimate a *wish* that the doctrine were not true.' That many of the best and ablest men, despite this adverse predisposition, have firmly held the doctrine as a plain and undeniable truth of God's Word, is in favour of its truth. For, if it would have been congenial to disbelieve it, why have so many learned, able, and honest minds been unable to do so.

There is, however, a higher sense in which the most generous and holy man may not wish it were false.

If it be the appointment of the all-wise One, it must be the best on the whole, though the proofs of its being so may not yet appear.

Can a thoroughly healthy and devout mind wish a fact to be otherwise than as God has ordered it?

We may safely wish there had been no persistent wickedness to necessitate it, as one may wish there had been no sin to entail *any* consequent suffering. But the wickedness having arisen, does it become us to wish it severed from its just and natural effect? We must not shut our eyes to the heinousness of sin, nor allow our minds to be so ill-balanced as to overlook the malignity of trampling 'under foot the Son of God,' or 'grow impatient with the claims of eternal righteousness.'

We must subordinate human feeling and credence to the authority of the Bible. Those who contemplate the doctrine in question are sometimes taunted with a delight in contemplating the sufferings of the wicked.

The reply to this unjust charge is, 'that a frank statement on the affirmative side of

the question may be conceived in a more delicate and tremulous tenderness than the utterance of vapid generalities of hope, while reason itself binds us to accept the conclusions of consciousness and revelation in preference to the plausibilities of mere sentiment.'

In the history of the Christian Church numbers of men have had this doctrine inwrought into their moral nature, and under the firm belief of its terrible penalty have gone forth like flaming seraphs to warn sinners to 'flee from the wrath to come.' Following the example of the blessed Master, they have not hesitated to lay the foundation of their ministry in the utterance and reiteration of Scriptural denunciations against impenitent sinners; and all this has been compatible with the most refined and tremulous tenderness. 'By their fruits ye shall know them,' said Christ. This principle is applicable to every system of theology.

What are the fruits of annihilationism and universalism compared with the fruits of the orthodox faith? Which has been the most successful in winning men from sin to holiness? It has been admitted by quotations in these pages that the doctrines of annihilation and universalism present less powerful motives to wicked men to forsake their sins. And is

it not true, that nearly the *whole* of the disciples of these theories were not induced to forsake sin and join the Church by the teachings of annihilationism or universalism, but by the orthodox mode of presenting the truth?

In conclusion, however, we admit that the disciples of these schools of thought have on their side depraved human nature, an amiable religious sentiment, and a lax system of theology. Whether their teachings, combined with the sceptical spirit of the times, will make any *permanent* impression upon the Christian public is a contingency which we do not undertake *positively* to decide. But this we do venture to affirm, that the man who teaches either the doctrine of annihilation or universalism is in the position of a pilot who, careless or otherwise, is steering the ship upon the rocks.

THE END.

HAYMAN BROS. AND LILLY, PRINTERS, HATTON HOUSE, FARRINGDON ROAD, E.C.

BT 930 .W66 1877
Wood, Thomas
The doctrines of
annihilation and

33220

BT 930 .W66 1877
Wood, Thomas
The doctrines of
annihilation and

33220

DEMCO

C0-CDH-516